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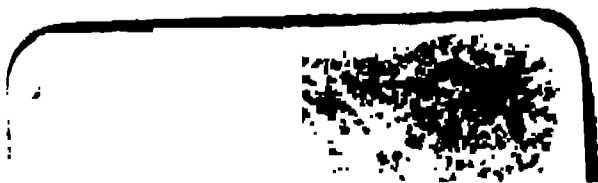
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LECTURES

ON THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

BY THE

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IN order that its readers may know what they have reason to expect, and not be disappointed at not finding what is incompatible with its plan, it is necessary that the nature of a work be distinctly understood. The following Lectures, then, are now printed in the same form in which they were preached to the congregation to whom the author ministers. All very long criticisms would have been unsuitable in popular discourses; but criticism has been often introduced where it was thought that it could be brought to bear in a perfectly intelligible, brief, natural, and useful way. The author can say, that while he was studious of simplicity, both in matter and in style, he read and consulted a great many authors, and was at great pains to make up his mind decidedly as to the meaning of the sacred text. In general, he has given only the result to which his examinations led him; occasionally, however, he has given a full statement of the steps by which he was led to the result. He has consulted, and is, of course, more or less, indebted to almost all the common expositors of Scripture, as well as many critical writers less generally known; but he has not slavishly followed any of them.

He has endeavoured to observe the distinction between the lecture and the sermon; and has proceeded on the principle of an actual, *bona fide* exposition, and practical application of the passages under review—restraining himself from excursions which, however inviting, appeared to him not fully warranted by these passages. While he has made it a rule to notice, in some degree, almost every thing contained in the verses under consideration, he has, nevertheless, often selected prominent points, to be expatiated on and pressed, at considerable length.

The practical improvement has sometimes been introduced in going along, and sometimes reserved till the conclusion, according as the one arrangement or the other appeared to him the more advisable. Such, at least, was the plan he proposed to himself, however much he may have failed in its execution. The work has extended to a greater length than, in one view, may be thought desirable; and yet, every such work must be but flimsy, unless reasonable space be allowed; and it seemed impracticable to go through the whole Gospel according to Luke, in the full, and what may be called the Scottish, style of lecturing, in much shorter compass.

Conscious that much imperfection adheres to his work, notwithstanding his having bestowed on it all the care which his other engagements permit; he yet hopes for the kind indulgence of those who are capable of judging of the difficulties attending an undertaking of such a nature, and of so great an extent. At the same time, however conscious he is of his own insufficiency, he has no hesitation in asserting the paramount importance of the facts, and doctrines, and precepts, which he has endeavoured to illustrate and apply, in thus tracing the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He humbly trusts, that his gracious Master will accept of this attempt to show forth the honour of his name, and to recommend the riches of his grace; and it is his earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may so far bless the work as to render it, in some degree, instrumental in leading thoughtless persons to attend to the things which belong to their peace, and in "building up believers in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation."

ABERDEEN, *August* 1838.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE First Edition of these Lectures having been for some time out of print, a Second Edition is now published, containing the whole work, carefully revised.

JAMES FOOTE.

ABERDEEN, *March* 1848.

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

LUKE I. 1-4.

“ Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word ; 3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

WITH what a treasure has God intrusted us, in putting into our hands the Holy Scriptures ! “ They have God,” says one, “ for their author, salvation for their end, and truth without any mixture of error for their contents.” Apart from what is their most important purpose, where are there to be found histories so curious, delineations of customs so graphical, or compositions so poetical, so beautiful, and so sublime ? Surely the man of literature, taste, and general information, should be ashamed to be ignorant of these writings ; and the plain man, of ordinary curiosity, can nowhere else expect such gratification. But they come to us possessed of far higher claims on our regard ; they come to us as a communication from the living God, to instruct us what we are, and whither we are tending ; they come to show us how we may be delivered from condemnation and ruin, and entitled and prepared to enter on eternal life. It is in them that, “ through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give us light, when we are sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.” How deeply, then, does it concern us to whom they are addressed, and of whom an account of our reception of them will be required, under the promise of life, or under the penalty of death, how deeply does it concern us, to take heed to their contents, and to submit ourselves to their guidance !

The whole Inspired Writings now most commonly go under the name of the Bible ; that is, the Book. They constitute the Book, by way of eminence, the Book of books, the best of books. He who is ignorant of this book, whatever other books he may be familiar with, will find at last that he is ignorant indeed ; but he who rightly knows this book, however unlearned he may be in other respects, will find that nothing farther is necessary to his safety and happiness. There are vast multitudes of books in the world, and many of them are useful in their own way ;

but this is the book which God has promised to bless for our spiritual good ; and it is only in so far as other books are imbued with its spirit, and lead men to consult its pages, that they can be of any use to our souls. Luther declared that he should wish all his books to be burned, if he could know that they would have any effect in keeping men from reading the Scriptures.

This book consists of a great number of separate, and, in one sense independent, but harmonious and mutually illustrative writings, composed at very distant periods, and collected and bound up together. It is divided into two great parts—the Old and the New Testaments. Some are for confining the meaning of the word Testament to that of a covenant, or contract, or agreement, between two parties ; and others incline rather to the sense of a latter will. The original word is of more extensive meaning than either covenant or latter will, and, literally rendered, signifies a disposition—that is, a conveyance ; and this, in the affairs of common life, is usually done by a contract or will, or some solemn deed or transaction.

The New Testament, or the division of these writings which contains the new form of this conveyance of spiritual blessings, is naturally divided into the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation—the word “ Gospel,” signifying good news, or the glad tidings of salvation ; the four Gospels are four distinct accounts of these good news, drawn up in the form, chiefly, of a history of Jesus Christ, by whom alone it is that the blessings reported and offered in the Gospel have been procured. The writers of these four histories are commonly called the four Evangelists : not, however, in the exact sense in which the word is used when it is joined, in Eph. iv. 11, with apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers, and when it is applied to such men as Philip and Timothy ; but, in order to designate these writers as evangelical historians. Of these four, two were apostles, namely, Matthew and John ; and the other two, Mark and Luke, were distinguished disciples. The nature and the degree of the correspondence between these four historians furnish a strong proof of the credibility of them all. Mark, indeed, has been supposed by some to abridge from Matthew ; but the other three, at least, are quite original historians. The whole take notice of most of the leading events of our Lord’s life, presenting, generally speaking, an obviously harmonious account, but containing, in a few instances, some apparent discrepancies, which a little attention reconciles, and which, if the evangelists had had any design of imposing a forgery on the world, they would have taken care to avoid. Should it be asked why so many accounts of the same transactions have been handed down to us?—it is obvious to reply, that while each contains many circumstances nowhere else recorded, the whole united, present the substance of the history in a very commanding way, according to the ordinary rule of evidence, that “ at the mouth

of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established." Were two out of the four Gospels to be selected for lecturing, which should give the most comprehensive view, and yet have the least interference, or repetition, they must be either those of Matthew and John, or those of Luke and John. With the view, if spared, of proceeding in order, through the Gospel according to Luke, the first four verses now read will furnish us with ground for some introductory observations. Here we shall consider, in reference to this Gospel, its author, its divine authority, the time at which it was written, its language, the person to whom it was dedicated, and some of its peculiar advantages: after which we shall again read over these verses, in order to notice what may not have been included under any of these heads.

1. *The author of this Gospel has been universally acknowledged to be Luke.* As Providence gave him an opportunity of being much in the society of the Apostle Paul, there can be no doubt that he profited greatly by it in general, and may even have consulted with him as to the writing of this book; it appears, however, to be altogether an extreme, to attribute much in this respect to that apostle, and still more to represent him in any sense as the author of it. There are some circumstances with regard to Luke's history which are ascertained; and there are others which it might be desirable to know, but which are either altogether hidden, or uncertain, and on which, therefore, discussions which could not be brought to any satisfactory conclusion, would be here quite out of place. There is a tradition that Luke was born at Antioch in Syria; but it is not agreed whether he was by birth a heathen or a Jew. Nor can anything be affirmed, with certainty, with respect to his early history, or conversion to Christianity. We read nothing of him till he is mentioned among the companions of the Apostle Paul. From the 16th chapter, to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke repeatedly writes in the first person plural, using the word *we*; which shows that he was the companion of the Apostle Paul in many of his journeys and in his voyage to Rome. Luke is believed by some to have been one of the seventy, whom our Lord sent out, two and two; but this is questioned by others.

We are informed by the Apostle Paul, in the 4th chapter to the Colossians, 14th verse, that Luke was a *physician*. He is there styled "Luke, the beloved physician." He had endeared himself, we may believe, to the apostle and others, both by his exertions in the cause of the gospel, and by the affectionate exercise of his medical skill. Irrational and superstitious ideas long prevented this profession from occupying that honourable place in public estimation which, in modern times, it most deservedly holds. There seem, however, in very early times, to have been a few who proceeded on more sensible principles. The earliest mention of physicians is towards the end of

Genesis, where it is said that Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm the body of his father Jacob. The following passage of the son of Sirach, from Ecclesiasticus, at once speaks with proper respect of the human instruments, and justly ascribes useful inventions and success in medicine to the providence and blessing of God: "Honour a physician with the honour due unto him, for the uses which you may have of him; for the Lord hath created him. For of the Most High cometh healing, and he shall receive honour of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head, and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them." It was, doubtless, very irrational to trust in demons and enchantments, to the neglect of suitable natural means; but it is also irrational, and, considering the light we now enjoy, very sinful, for patients to seek to physicians, and not also to the Lord; and for either patients or physicians to trust in natural means, independently of the divine blessing. Let none say that it matters nothing what may be the religious and moral character of the physician, provided he be skilful in his profession. It matters much, very much, at least to himself; and it may be of more consequence, in some instances, to his patients than may at first be supposed. Surely it will not be said that his skill is the consequence of impiety. Is he skilful and successful, though irreligious? He would be more skilful, and more successful, were he accustomed, in his studies and in his practice, to look for the guidance and the blessing of God. It is certain, too, that much good may thus often be done by him to the spiritual interests of men; and he may be, in some cases, serviceable in inducing that composed and resigned frame of mind which is very favourable to a bodily cure. There is something truly captivating and refreshing to the Christian mind in the whole demeanour of those medical men who are both eminent in their profession, and habitually influenced by religious principle.

It is affirmed by some that Luke was also a *painter*; and so far has this idea been carried, that in some places there are pictures of the Virgin Mary shown, which are said to have been drawn by him, or at least to be copies of originals by his hand. But neither the Scriptures, nor the early Christian historians, say a word of Luke being possessed of this elegant accomplishment.* Had he been thus qualified, and could he have seen the effects which his performances, if extant, would have produced, there can be no doubt that he would rather never have touched a pencil, or that, if he had, he would rather have committed his finest works to the flames, than have left them to future ages as an incentive to superstition and idolatry. If, however, he did not paint the faces of the Virgin and her

* Nicephorus (Callistus) is the first who mentions it, and he did not write till the fourteenth century.

Son with the colours of the limner, he did what was of much more importance ; he, in the book before us, drew to the life an exquisite portraiture of their character, which continues with us long after the master-pieces of the ancient painters have vanished, and which will continue to the end of time—the antidote of superstition, the guide of the serious inquirer, and the admiration of all good men.

It has been already stated, that the latter part of the Acts of the Apostles shows Luke to have been much in company with the Apostle Paul. This is further corroborated in 2 Tim. iv. 11, where Paul says: “Only Luke is with me ;” and in the 24th verse of the Epistle to Philemon, where the apostle mentions Luke or Lucas (for the names are one) among his fellow-labourers. Ecclesiastical historians, and other early Christian writers, state a variety of circumstances relating to his labours, and to the time, place, and manner of his death ; but their accounts and opinions are too contradictory for any of them being adopted here with confidence.

The works of Luke are two, namely, his Gospel, and his Acts of the Apostles. The universal consent of the Church, from the earliest times, is satisfactory evidence that he was the author of both.

2. The second point we proposed to consider is the *divine authority* of this Gospel, including, of course, its genuineness. And here it may be observed, first of all, that the great care which the Church took to distinguish the genuine and divinely-inspired Gospels from the spurious, and their unanimity of decision, clearly prove the authority of those Gospels which are now received. None of these spurious Gospels are mentioned till towards the end of the second century, and few of them till the third or fourth century ; whereas the earliest Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, then others in succession, all show that our four Gospels were received as canonical, and these four alone. They were constantly read in the public assemblies. Copies of them were transcribed, and dispersed into various quarters ; and the very disputes which arose preserved them, as well as the rest of the Scriptures, from alteration.

Again : if, as is probable, Luke was one of the seventy who were commissioned to preach and work miracles, then was he also miraculously qualified to compose this history ; and we have as good reason to admit the divine authority of this evangelist, and also of Mark, as of the apostolic evangelists, Matthew and John. Nay, though we were to doubt as to Luke being one of the seventy, yet both his human and his divine qualifications for this work might be safely rested solely on his being called to preach the gospel, and to act and write under the eye and approval of the Apostle Paul.

A third argument for the divine origin of the Gospel by Luke, and an argument which is independent of the other sacred

books, is, that various circumstantial particulars respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, therein and nowhere else foretold, have been exactly fulfilled.

A very satisfactory proof also arises from the mutual dependence and connection of this and the other sacred books, especially the other three Gospels. In the midst of a delightful and instructive variety, there is such a harmony of fact, of doctrine, and of spirit, as to demonstrate that all these holy men had one common guide, and wrote not only truly, but by inspiration, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

With regard to the nature and degree of this inspiration, theologians are accustomed to speak of the inspiration of *suggestion*, and the inspiration of *direction*—suggestion conveying to the mind of the inspired person the knowledge of things of which he previously was ignorant; and direction so guiding the mouth, or the pen of the inspired person, as to secure the correct representation of things which he already knew. There is, unquestionably, a foundation in nature for this distinction; but it should only be stated, if stated at all, in a way perfectly consistent with the doctrine of plenary, or full and verbal inspiration.

Its very early reception and divine authority being clear, it is comparatively of small importance that we are not able to ascertain exactly, in the

3d place, *The time when this Gospel was written.* Thus far is certain, that it was written before the Acts of the Apostles, in the commencement of which it is referred to as Luke's "former treatise." And it being probable, from the conclusion of the Acts, that they were written at least before the ninth year of Nero, it seems to follow, that this Gospel was composed at an earlier period than some suppose, and before the death of the Apostle Paul.

4. *The original language* of this Gospel was unquestionably the Greek, which was the language in most general use in those days. Luke must have been a man of education, and of a polished mind. His style, though not altogether free of Hebrew idioms, approaches nearer to the pure Greek than that of the other New Testament writers. Good judges are of opinion that his writings, considered merely as compositions, are able to bear a comparison with those of the finest classical authors; and it must be obvious to the readers of our version, that his manner of writing is very accurate, engaging, copious, emphatical, and sublime. Nor ought these characteristics to be considered as trivial or useless. They may, indeed, be thought so by some who are not capable of judging; but as the Word of God was intended for the wise as well as for the unwise, for the scholar as well as for the unlearned, these diversities of manner afford, in the estimation of those whose education and habits qualify them to judge of such matters, an interesting view of the genius, and a very gratifying confirmation of the truth, of the whole.

5. *The person to whom this Gospel is addressed.* The name

"Theophilus," signifies a lover, or beloved of God; but it would be very unnatural to suppose, with some, that the word is here used as a feigned name, to signify any Christian. Though this method has been adopted by other writers, it is not agreeable to the practice of the inspired. Theophilus is plainly the same real individual to whom the book of the Acts of the Apostles also is addressed. He is here styled "Most Excellent." This was an honorary title bestowed on persons high in office, and of nobility, somewhat similar to the title of "Excellency" with us. Thus it is given to Felix, in Acts xxxiii. 26: "Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix." Exactly the same title, too, in the original, though differently rendered in our version, is given to Festus in Acts xxvi. 25, where Paul says: "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Theophilus, therefore, was not only a Christian, but a nobleman, and probably high in office.

Thus, though "not many mighty, not many noble, were called," yet some such were called from the first; and thus some such are still found among the faithful. Such instances are highly important and pleasing. Not but that the soul of the meanest peasant is, in itself, as precious as the soul of the most illustrious nobleman—not but that the salvation of every soul transcends in importance every worldly consideration; but in reference to the probable effect on others, there is an undeniable difference. Every good man may be of some service to the cause of Christ; but when rank, and office, and wealth, and talent, are engaged, God may be considered as himself putting more powerful means in operation; and when his own blessing is superinduced, the good effects are correspondingly extensive.

From this form of address, used by an inspired writer, may be fairly deduced the lawfulness and propriety, generally speaking, of giving to men the ordinary titles of respect. As to our Lord's teaching his disciples not to be called rabbi, and to call no man father, or master, on earth, Scripture must be interpreted consistently with itself, and that passage, of course, consistently with such as the one now before us; and this rule of interpretation leads to the conclusion that Christ forbade, not the use of common terms in common life, but the assumption, on the one hand, and the yielding, on the other, of any human authority in matters of religion which might at all interfere with his own. They err, therefore, who think that there is any propriety or religion in assuming a singularity in such things, or in sturdily refusing what are usually considered marks of civility and of respect. It is unworthy at once of the Christian and of the man, to be guilty of hollow hypocrisy or fawning servility; but it is both dutiful and adorning to be courteous, and to give honour to whom honour is due.

It has been usual with authors to dedicate their works to particular persons, sometimes with the design of securing their

patronage, sometimes merely as a mark of respect and affection, and sometimes with a particular view to the benefit of the individuals themselves. The dictates of inspiration needed not, it is true, the support of any human authority; yet it would not have been unworthy of divine wisdom to have adopted such secondary means. While the dedication before us is an obvious expression of high regard to Theophilus, it distinctly states that his personal improvement was what Luke greatly desired: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." The word rendered "instructed," though of more extensive meaning, answers exactly to our word "catechised;" and, therefore (if the practice existed so early), may be considered as referring to the instruction given to catechumens before their full admission to the communion of the Church. These things Luke wished Theophilus to know more certainly, accurately, and fully; and for this purpose wrote them down. Mark here the great superiority of written records over oral traditions; and also how obviously it is implied, in this clause, that the Scriptures are a full, plain, and sufficient rule, which the laity may with safety and profit, and should from conscience, consult for themselves.

Though immediately addressed, however, to Theophilus, this book, like the rest of Scripture, comes, with the stamp of divine authority, for the edification of all who may peruse it.

6. The goodness of God is worthy of notice in some of the *peculiar advantages* of this Gospel. It not only corroborates many of the facts previously related by Matthew and Mark, but contains a great proportion of information altogether new, and nowhere else recorded. Here, and here only, we have many circumstances relating to the birth of John the Baptist—the history of Zacharias—the angel's coming to the Virgin Mary—Elisabeth's exclamation—the annunciation of Christ's birth to the shepherds; together with the circumstances of his birth—his full genealogy up to Adam—his disputing with the doctors in the temple—and, not to enumerate more particulars, many excellent parables, such as the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the publican.

We shall now read over the greater part of this passage again, in order to notice a few things which do not fall so naturally under any of the particulars already adverted to.

"*Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration,*" or, as it might have been exactly rendered, "to compose a history," "*of those things which are most surely believed among us*"—that is, of the circumstances of the life of Jesus Christ—which, having been confirmed by full evidence, are firmly credited by us Christians. You observe the boldness and confidence with which Luke speaks, as to the full and rational conviction with which the truths of the Gospel were received by the first believers. The many histories here mentioned must

refer to some which are now lost, and not to those of Matthew and Mark; for if these were written before Luke's, they could not with any propriety be called many. Nor can Luke be here referring to any of the spurious and heretical Gospels, for none of these were of such antiquity. Indeed, there is no hint here given that these writers had any evil intention. The probability therefore is, that he refers to some persons, who, being uninspired, wrote either with a positively good intention, or from a desire to gratify the curiosity of others, being directed on the whole by true accounts which they had received from eye-witnesses, but being in many points defective, and in some even perhaps mistaken. The second verse runs thus: "*Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.*" Those on whose authority the truth of the history of Christ chiefly rests, had the best opportunities of judging; they did not follow themselves, or impose on others, cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of what they testified; and in proof of their sincerity, renounced all for his sake, and became public preachers of his word.

These uninspired accounts, however, being so imperfect and erroneous, Luke considered himself called on, or rather we should say, felt himself moved by the Holy Spirit, to write a full and accurate history. "*It seemed good to me also,*" says he, "*having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order.*" The word rendered, "having had perfect understanding," signifies having carefully followed out, and, of course, ascertained; but it does not limit our thoughts to any particular way of Luke's having acquired his knowledge. It would seem to contradict the second verse, to suppose that Luke was himself an eye-witness of the whole; and yet there is nothing said, either in the second or third verse, inconsistent with the idea of his having seen many things which he relates. If he was one of the seventy, he might not have been able to testify from personal observation, the occurrences from the very beginning of the Gospel history; but he must have been present at many of the subsequent occurrences. In one way or other, he came to the certain knowledge of all that he related. There are some who think the word (*ἀνωθεν*) rendered "from the very first," would have been better rendered "from above." But whether Luke intended to express that idea or not, there can be no doubt, that in addition to every other advantage, he did enjoy heavenly aid, to suggest where suggestion was necessary, and to secure against error in the narration of the facts which he had ascertained by natural and common means. His writing, "in order," is not to be so strictly interpreted as to signify that every miracle, and discourse, and journey, and every minute circumstance, was to be recorded in the exact order of time; but only, that while the great leading facts were to be in the order of time, the whole was to form a properly digested, connected, and methodical history.

We are commencing, then, my friends, a course of study and of instruction, with which, if God spare us, we shall proceed as regularly as convenience may permit. The sermon and the lecture, as they are usually called, have both of them their advantages. It is important, according to the former method, to select a short passage, or even a single point, and to expatiate on it, and represent it in a variety of lights, and to urge its practical improvement at much length: that method is indeed peculiarly fitted to awaken and to impress. Lecturing—that is, preaching on a larger portion, in which a number of different subjects will often be found—has also its peculiar recommendations. While the variety and occasional difficulties serve to arrest the attention, the whole is particularly calculated to convey information. Where a stated ministry is enjoyed, it is of great consequence to aim at a constant course of rational instruction; it being of much more importance that the affections should be reached through the medium of a well-furnished understanding, than excited by the studied and direct attempts of oratory and of art. It is an advantage, too, of lecturing straight on through a book, that it is the most likely way to secure a full representation of the whole counsel of God; for thus we do not cull out what, in our estimation, may be the easy or the favourite topics, but we take them just as we find them in the sacred pages. On this plan, also, many points which, on any other, could hardly be adverted to, without danger of our being suspected of personalities, fall naturally and unavoidably to be discussed. Besides, though such a book as this is professedly historical, the religion of doctrine and of practice is interwoven in a very instructive and engaging manner throughout. In this way, too, the great leading doctrines of the Gospel, though brought forward perhaps with less that is professedly argumentative, or exclusively prominent, are kept habitually before the mind, in due proportion, and in reference to real life, and presented, as it were, with an agreeable mellowness and raciness, or richness and freshness, to the spiritual taste.

Let us, then, be truly desirous to be impressed and edified by these exercises. Let us bring to them a disposition of humility, of teachableness, and of seriousness. Let us bring a disposition of implicit submission of understanding, of heart, and of conduct, to the dictates of this inspired work. And in order to our reaping any advantage from these records, let us habitually keep in mind the necessity of a believing dependence on the assistance of that Spirit who indited them; and let us be much in actual prayer, that he would be pleased to open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. Thus may we expect that the word which we expound, or hear expounded, will become profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, and prove the means of making us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

LECTURE II.

LUKE I. 5-25.

"There was, in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years. 8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. 20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."

THE first four verses of this chapter contain the evangelist's preface, from which we took occasion to consider the author of this Gospel—its inspiration—the time at which it was written—its language—the person to whom it is dedicated—some of its peculiar advantages, and some other particulars not included under any of these heads. Having in this preface skilfully and gracefully prepared the way, the evangelist enters immediately on the history of the Redeemer's harbinger. And whereas Matthew and Mark introduced John the Baptist to the notice of their readers at the advanced period of his preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and his baptizing his followers in Jordan, Luke commences with the Baptist's genealogy and birth, and states many particulars relating to his early history, which, though they had been far less remarkable in themselves, would

have been interesting in reference to one who afterwards became so conspicuous, but which are peculiarly important as additional evidences of the divine mission, and additional illustrations of the office both of the Baptist himself, and of that illustrious Deliverer and King before whom he was to proceed as a pioneer to clear the way.

The evangelist begins with stating, in a general way, the time of the Baptist's conception—it was “*in the days of Herod, the king of Judea.*” This is not Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, who was also called Antipas, of whom we read in the 3d chapter, full thirty years after, who beheaded John the Baptist, and who, with his men of war, set Jesus at nought. But this is Herod the son of Antipater, who was usually called Herod the Great. The history of this Herod is very eventful; but it is sufficient here to notice, that in the employment of the Roman government he conquered the Jews, and made his way to the throne by force, and by the slaughter of the Jewish sanhedrim, or council, in whom the supreme power resided. That council did, indeed, nominally exist afterwards; but its power of life and death, its sovereignty, was gone. The sceptre had now departed from Judah, and there was no longer a lawgiver of his posterity; the reality of power was no more, and the very shadow of it was soon to vanish; it was the time, then, for Shiloh to come, to whom the gathering of the people was to be. The exact year is not here mentioned; but according to the most generally received chronology, the conception of John took place in the sixth year before the commencement of the Christian era. It is true, that what we call the year of our Lord, leads us to think so many years have passed since his birth; but it is pretty well ascertained that the first year of our era would not go farther back than to four years after his birth.

There was in those days, “*a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia.*” The eldest of Aaron's sons was the high priest; the rest of his sons were priests. In process of time, the family of Aaron multiplied to such a degree, that the priests could not be all constantly employed in actual service at the tabernacle and temple. In order, therefore, that none of them might be excluded from the honour, and that the regular discharge of the duties might be secured, the priests were divided, in the days of David, into twenty-four courses, or orders, as may be seen at length in the 24th chapter of 1 Chronicles; Abiah, or Abijah, is there mentioned as the eighth division. Though some of the families of the priests were lost in the Babylonish captivity, the names of the courses seem to have been still retained.

The name of Zacharias' wife was “*Elisabeth.*” This name, which has become so common, was of very early origin, being the same with Elisheba, which, as we read in Exodus vi. 23, was the name of Aaron's wife. The meaning of Elisheba, or Elisabeth, is, “the oath of God.” Elisabeth was of the family of Aaron; not that those of the tribe of Levi were, like those of

the other tribes, absolutely prohibited from marrying out of their own tribe, for in their case there was no danger of the confusion of inheritance.

Of this couple we have this character in the 6th verse: "*They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*" It will not be supposed that this description is intended to represent them as sinless, or having any ground to boast before God; for who, in this sense, can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" But this is certainly a high encomium on them, as sincerely and eminently pious. They were, doubtless, righteous before God, in the only way in which any of the fallen race of Adam were ever righteous, namely, by a reliance on the divine mercy through Messiah's death, which was typified in the legal sacrifices. In evidence, too, of their being thus accepted, their life was outwardly righteous and exemplary. Perhaps the words, "commandments and ordinances," as distinguished from each other, may signify, the former, all the precepts for the regulation of common life, especially the moral precepts; and the latter, all the institutions relating to the worship of God. In these they were, though not perfect, yet on the whole righteous in the sight of God, and blameless in the sight of men; nay, deserving of being commended and imitated. Such was the character of these two worthy persons, who as yet had no family, and were now well advanced in years.

It happened, we are told, that while Zacharias "*executed the priest's office before God, in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.*" It has been already stated that the priests were divided into twenty-four courses. These appeared to have come up, by regular rotation, to serve each a week. But even one course, or set, was so numerous, that it was necessary to make a selection out of it of those who should perform the most solemn parts of the service; and this was done by lot. It fell, then, to the lot of Zacharias to burn incense. This was, doubtless, the daily morning and evening incense, of which a particular account will be found in the 30th chapter of Exodus. This incense was a fine perfume, which was burnt in a censer, placed upon what was called the altar of incense, which was made of Shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, and which was placed, not in the inmost part of the sanctuary, which was called the most holy place, or the holy of holies, but in the other division of the sanctuary. Aaron was first directed to burn this incense; but afterwards, it appears that any priest might do it. Of the sacred typical meaning of this ceremony we shall afterwards speak.

Verse 10: "*And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.*"

The order of the Jewish daily service was this: Every morning and evening a lamb was slain, and the priest to whose

lot it fell went within the first veil to burn incense. When he went in, a bell was rung, to give notice that it was the hour of prayer. There were then in attendance without, in the court of the priests, the whole course of priests, and many of the Levites; some "stationary men," or fixed persons, whose business it was to represent the whole congregation, in laying their hands upon the head of the sacrifice, in token of the transference of their guilt and punishment to the victim; in the court of Israel, an assembly of as many of the people as chose to attend; and in the court of Gentiles, probably some Gentile worshippers. It was very customary with the more pious to attend daily. Thus we read, in the beginning of the 3d chapter of the Acts, that "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer." If, as is likely enough, this was a Sabbath, the concourse would be very great. While the priest was in the sanctuary, the people addressed themselves to mental prayer.

How solemn the service in which Zacharias is now employed! The sacrifice being slain, whose smoke was now ascending to heaven, and every preparation being made in the court, he proceeds to transact for the nation, and particularly for the assembled multitude, whom he leaves behind him. Advancing with slow and solemn step, and with the smoking censer in his hand, towards the sanctuary, he puts aside the outer curtain and disappears from their sight. Imagination follows him in, where, except on pain of destruction, no other mortal could enter. What must be his feelings in going on with the service of the incense! All without is silent as death, and all within is so stillly impressive, that he is almost afraid to draw his breath. No mortal eye beholds his conduct; but the eternal Jehovah, who will be sanctified in them that draw nigh, surrounds him with his more immediate presence. Take heed, Zacharias, to thy demeanour, lest thou be smitten in the greatness of thine iniquity, or lest thy hand, stretched forth rashly, be withered; or lest, through any fault of thine, the Lord deny his blessing to the people. He places on the golden altar the censer with the incense, with whose cloudy perfume the apartment is filled and rendered fragrant, that the Lord may smell a sweet savour. Surely any unaccountable rustling, or any unusual sight, would now be too much for a man of ordinary nerves.—Having discharged this work, and having offered up a suitable prayer, Zacharias, filled with holy awe, was about to retire, when, lo, "*there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*" No wonder that "*when Zacharias saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*" Such has usually been the effect of supernatural appearances, even on good men, as is exemplified in Manoah, Daniel, Paul, and others. Man's weakness is incapable of easily bearing the glory of such appearances; and his sinfulness naturally makes him afraid that that heavenly messenger may be commissioned to him in displeasure. Hence appear the wisdom and goodness of God in employing,

as the heralds of gospel salvation, not angels but human beings, whose terror does not make us afraid. If, however, we shall be so wise for ourselves as to receive the Gospel, and to take the Lord of angels for our Lord, then we shall be prepared without fear to meet, not one angel, or a few angels, but the whole angelic host, with the Lord at their head—that host from which the ungodly will shrink in dismay, but which the ransomed shall gladly join round about the throne, to the number of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.

It was on an errand of grace that the angel was now sent; he therefore addresses Zacharias, as angels were often wont to do, in the kind and encouraging words, “Fear not:” “*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*” If the prayer referred to a petition for offspring, it must have been put up before. In all probability, however, the angel refers to the particular prayer which Zacharias had, like the other priests in similar circumstances, been just putting up for the Jewish people, for the coming of the Messiah, and for the salvation of all nations. And the connection between that prayer and the birth of John is abundantly obvious, as he was to be the immediate forerunner of the Consolation of Israel and the Desire of all nations—of Him who was to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to be also a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the ends of the earth. The name by which Zacharias was directed to call his son, was very expressive of the purpose for which he was given, John, or Johanan, as it is in the Old Testament, signifying “the grace of Jehovah,” or “Jehovah will be gracious.”

“*And thou shalt have joy and gladness,*” continues the angel; “*and many shall rejoice at his birth.*” Could some parents foresee how wicked some of their children would become, instead of rejoicing, they would grieve at their birth; they would wish they had never been born. John, however, was to be a great comfort and honour to his parents. And many besides of their acquaintances, and of the people at large, were to rejoice when they should see that the circumstance of his birth, and of his early life, prognosticated that he was to become a public blessing. Four leading particulars are then mentioned by the angel, on account of which men should rejoice.

First, “*For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.*” Considered apart from his ministerial character, there was nothing in John’s appearance that was great, but, on the contrary, much that the world would call mean. He was the son of an ordinary priest. He had no wealth, no titles, no power. He lived, not the stately inhabitant of the palace, but the wandering eremite of the wilderness. He wore, not the soft clothing of silk and purple, but a rough garment of camel’s hair girt with a plain leathern girdle. His drink was the limpid water of the well, or of the brook; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Where,

then, was his greatness? He was great in the sight of the Lord. He was eminent for wisdom and piety. He was a holy and devoted servant of that God whom he honoured, and by whom he was honoured. He was great, as a powerful, intrepid, and successful preacher of righteousness, and as the chosen herald of the Prince of peace. "Verily, I say unto you," said Jesus, "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." On this we may remark, that whatever worldly greatness may come to men, or to their children, it ought not to be the leading object of their pursuit. To be great in the estimation of God, ought to be their chief ambition. However high men may rise in earthly honours, if they neglect God, and do little, or nothing, for his cause, they are but little men. How thankful ought we to be, that, in the possession of Christian character and privileges, we may rise very high, higher even than John the Baptist; "for he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he!"

Secondly, John was to be a Nazarite: "*He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.*" One of the rules is here put for the whole rules of the order. A full account of the laws of the Nazarite is contained in the 6th chapter of Numbers, which you may consult at your leisure. Thus Samson and Samuel were Nazarites for life. This character was well suited to the office which the Baptist had to fulfil. It is worthy of notice, too, that in Amos ii. 11, the Lord, in enumerating the instances of his kindness to his people, says: "I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites;" intimating that by their example and instructions they were a public blessing. The strongly marked features in the habits of the Nazarite, should be viewed as typically teaching that, not only the ministers, but all the people of God, should abstain from sin, be temperate in all things, be superior to earthly pleasures and cares, and be altogether a peculiar people, distinguished from men of the world.

Thirdly, The Baptist was to be "*filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*" He was, doubtless, shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, like others; but a saving change was to be wrought on him by the Holy Spirit, from his birth; and the seed of grace, being early sown in his heart, was soon to appear in the fruits of wisdom and piety. An argument hence arises in favour of infant baptism. If infants were either free from sin altogether, or incapable of being delivered from it, there might be an absurdity in administering to them that ordinance which is a sign of the washing away of sin: but as they are born in sin, and capable of regeneration, why not admit them to the sign? "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized," who may have "received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Happy they who are indeed filled with the Holy Ghost and sanctified from their birth, or from the age of infancy! They never know what it is to have a mind altogether dark, or a heart

altogether depraved. They cannot remember the time when there was not in them a prevalent tendency to what is good. They are saved from much sin and sorrow. But it becomes them, as they grow in stature, to grow in wisdom, and in favour with God and man; and if long spared, it will justly be expected that their progress should be great. As for those who have not yet received the Holy Ghost, who are "sensual, not having the Spirit," let them be anxious that the Lord would have mercy upon them, and let them pray that he would pour out upon them his enlightening and sanctifying influences.

Fourthly, The last illustration here given of John's character, as a cause of rejoicing on account of his birth, is the great success of his ministry, which bore a striking resemblance to that of Elias, or Elijah: "*Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*" "Behold," says Jehovah, in Mal. iv. 5, "I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;"—not literally Elijah himself, as some of the Jews seem erroneously to have supposed, but John the Baptist, of whom our Lord said expressly (Matt. xi. 14), "This is Elias, which was for to come." The Baptist was so called, because in many things he resembled Elijah, which is a common enough form of speech. Thus we call a man a Samson, or a Solomon, or an Alexander, or a Mæcenas, to signify that he is very strong, or very wise, or a great warrior, or a great patron of learning. John resembled Elijah in the austere mode of his life, and the searching and awakening strain of his ministry. He came in the spirit of Elias—under the influence of the same Divine Spirit, or in a similar frame of mind: and in the power of Elias—not with the power of working miracles, but with similar energy and success in his ministry. Or, the spirit and power joined together may mean, as in some other places,* a powerful and more than ordinary degree of spiritual influence. He was to turn, or convert many of the children of Israel to God; and accordingly he successfully preached to, and baptized multitudes. He was to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,"—in Malachi, it is added, "and the heart of the children to their fathers." Taking that passage exactly as it is here, its most obvious meaning is, that his preaching was to allay family feuds, and to unite different sects in a profession of repentance. Or if, as both the Hebrew and the Greek admit, it be rendered, "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers *with* the children," then it will signify that both parents and children—many of all ages and all descriptions—were to be converted. He was also to "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"—to religion, which is the true wisdom of just men. And thus he was to "make ready a people pre-

* Acts x. 38; 1 Thess. i. 3-5.

pared for the Lord." By means, chiefly, of the preaching and baptism of repentance, and the views he gave of a coming Messiah, whom he taught his disciples to expect, many were made ready for Christ's appearance, and when he actually came forward, received him as their Saviour and their Lord. Thus it is that a conviction of sin, and some knowledge of the work of the Redeemer, are still the preludes to the reception of the Gospel, and the law becomes our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

"*And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.*" Zacharias' words are much the same with Abraham's when he said, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit"* this land? and with Mary's, "How shall this be?"† Gideon, too, asked a sign.‡ In these three cases, no fault was found with the desire expressed, and the answer was altogether gracious; whereas in the case of Zacharias, it was otherwise, though the request was apparently the same; therefore the spirit must have been essentially different. In the three first cases referred to, the request proceeded, not from unbelief, but from a desire to have their faith further confirmed; whereas in this case, it must have proceeded from unbelief and distrust, and was, therefore, sinful. Thus the Searcher of hearts can, in every instance, exactly distinguish the various sentiments of the human mind. No thoughts can elude his scrutiny, no words can impose upon him; all things are naked and open to him with whom we have to do.

The Most High, nevertheless, resolved to gratify the wish of Zacharias; accordingly, it is added, "*And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.*" We are assured that the angels are very numerous, and it appears they have their proper names. Only two, however, are mentioned by name in Scripture—Michael and Gabriel. Gabriel signifies "the strength of God." This angel is mentioned in the 8th and 9th chapters of Daniel; and in the 26th verse of this chapter, he is mentioned as sent to the Virgin Mary. Now, the appearance of Gabriel ought to have been enough to satisfy Zacharias, who, knowing him to be an angel, was very unreasonable in asking any other sign. Nevertheless, a sign was granted, but such a sign as, while it answered Zacharias' purpose, was a chastisement for his unbelief.

Verse 20: "*And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season.*" There was something very appropriate and just in this punishment: Zacharias had spoken distrustfully, and his lips are sealed in silence. Should we not admire the forbearance and long-suffering of God, which did not strike us dumb when we at any time spoke re-

* Gen. xv. 8.

† Ver. 34.

‡ Judg. vi. 17.

proachfully, or unadvisedly, with our lips? Yet there was something gracious in this dispensation, for the punishment was gentle and temporary, and fully answered the design intended. So, when the Lord corrects his own, it is in measure, and that they may be partakers of his holiness.

While these things were going on in the sanctuary, the people were engaged in the courts in prayer. But as the vision and consequent conversation, in addition to the priest's usual service and devotion, and perhaps in this case extraordinary supplications and earnestness, had required a longer time than common, the people began to wonder greatly why Zacharias was not coming out. They expected him, doubtless, to come out, as was usual at the dismissing of the congregation, to pronounce the blessing. The form of this blessing is given in Numb. vi. 22-27: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them." The people, then, were waiting, being unwilling to depart without the benediction.

However, when Zacharias did at last make his appearance, he was unable to pronounce the blessing, or even to say a single word. From this circumstance, as well as from the perturbation which was marked in his countenance, "*they perceived he had seen a vision*" (verse 22); and indeed he himself "*beckoned to them,*" and contrived to make them understand by signs that such had been the fact. It is added that "*he remained speechless,*" or as the original word (Κωφος) signifies, "deaf and dumb." That he was deaf as well as dumb, appears from the 62d verse, where we find that it was necessary to make signs to him. In this state he remained not only during his stay at Jerusalem, but till the circumcision of his son. No doubt, this striking event must have caused a very strong sensation among the Jews, and have awakened a great and general expectation as to the final result.

Having accomplished his week of residence, and as far as his dumbness permitted, of service at the temple, Zacharias returned to his own home. Elisabeth having conceived, lived retired for five months, that she might avoid ceremonial pollution, as her son was to be a Nazarite, and that she might have the more leisure for religious meditation, thanksgiving, and prayer as became a woman in her situation, who lived among a people by whom the being childless was reckoned a peculiar infelicity, because God had promised to multiply Abraham's descendants as the stars of heaven, and to raise up from among them the Saviour of the world.

In looking back on these verses, the following particulars present themselves as peculiarly practical in their bearings.

1. There is a *fine example for the imitation of those who are*

united as husband and wife. Zacharias and Elisabeth “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” A married couple are either both careless, or both pious, or the one of them is careless, and the other is pious. How sad, in the eye of a Christian mind, the spectacle of a pair, who care neither for their own souls, nor for the souls of each other! The world may smile on them in its most joyous mood, plenty may crown their board, health may sparkle in their faces, the voice of gaiety and mirth may resound in their dwellings, and they may be attached to each other with all the fondness of a creature’s love. But, alas! they are alienated from the Author of their comforts, they have no joys which can stand the test of heaven’s light, and, in the midst of all their attachment, to the best and most endearing love—to Christian love they are total strangers. Ye unsanctified and worldly pairs, how can you look at those to whom you are bound by the closest earthly ties, and indebted for the most persevering and the kindest earthly attentions—how can you look at them without self-reproach and remorse, when you reflect that of their only solid interests, their souls’ interests, their eternal interests, you are regardless, and that, if not ~~by~~ open and avowed attempts, at least by the tenor of your conduct, you are contributing to confirm them and sink them deeper and deeper in forgetfulness of God, in worldliness, in false peace, in spiritual lethargy? Ah! you cannot suppose that the blessing of Providence rests on your tabernacles; you cannot say that the comforts of divine grace refresh your hearts. Where is there now with you that indescribable peace which is felt, where is that voice of rejoicing and of salvation which is heard, in the dwellings of the righteous? Where have you principles which will bear up, and solace your minds, when the dark hour of trouble shall come upon you? Where will you be able to find any views, or consolations, or prospects, to comfort you when death shall come in between you, and bid you part? May the God of mercy turn your hearts aright to himself, and to each other, that instead of being mutual snares, you may be mutual monitors, and be brought to live together as heirs of the grace of God, that your prayers be not hindered.

When believers are unhappily connected with unbelieving partners, their situation is trying, but not hopeless. Let them cherish and manifest a spirit of love, dutifulness, prudence, and good temper. Let them be on the watch for likely means of doing their partners good, and let them never faint in bringing their case before God in their secret prayers. How glad will they be if these means prove successful! and there is good reason to hope that they may. “What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt not save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt not save thy wife?”

Greatly blessed, indeed, is the conjugal relation, when both parties are righteous before God. Not all the society on earth

can do so much for human happiness, as such an union is capable of effecting. One in interest, one in affection, one in God and in Christ, whether health and youth light up their countenance, or disease and years dim **their eye and** wither their bloom; whatever, in short, may befall **them, everything** renders them more interesting to each other in life, and everything is ripening them for the glory that is to be revealed. Well may we congratulate those who are in this condition; and well may they be encouraged to study to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless;—well may they, as long as God shall spare them together here, pass on cheerfully hand in hand; for far more blessed still shall they both be, where care and sorrow, and sin and separation, shall be unknown—where “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven.”

2. We have here *a beautiful view of the duty of prayer, in connection with the merit and intercession of the Redeemer.* The people were praying in the court at the time Zacharias was burning the incense in the sanctuary. (Sacrifice, too, had just been offered without, and the horns of the altar of incense were touched yearly with blood.) The usual connection between these two acts of prayer and incense gave rise to the elegant figure by which prayer was called incense, or compared to incense. “Let my prayer,” says the Psalmist, “be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” But, my friends, the true Israel of God have always been a praying people, seeking the supply of their daily temporal and spiritual wants: and they must, and do, always look for a gracious answer to their prayers only through the intercession of Christ, of which the incense was a striking emblem. It is in allusion to this part of the temple service that the prayers of God’s people are thus stated to be acceptable through the meritorious intercession of Christ, in Rev. viii. 3: “Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Let us, therefore, despair of acceptance in any other way than through the righteousness and intercession of our great Advocate; and let us be encouraged to persevere in believing prayer, assured that “he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

3. We learn from the 16th and 17th verses, in which the Baptist’s work is described, *the necessity of conversion even in those who are descended from professors, and educated as professors of true religion.* Observe, John, as an instrument, was to turn, or as the word is often rendered, to convert many, even of the children of Israel, to the Lord their God, and to convert them to the wisdom of the just. Now, there are some who are offended when we speak of the conversion of persons in this Christian

country. "Speak," say they, "of the conversion of the Jews, or of the Mohammedans, or of heathens, or of infidels, but it is absurd to speak of the conversion of those who believe the gospel." It is one thing, however, for men to say that they believe the gospel, and quite another actually to believe it. It is one thing to have the name, and quite another to have the character of Christians. The Jews looked on themselves as the favourites of Heaven, and made their boast in God, and yet they needed to be converted to the Lord. In like manner, those who are only nominal Christians need conversion to real Christianity, to true vital religion, as well as the heathen, or avowed infidels. View a man among yourselves, when he is in nature's blindness, and if not impious and immoral, at least negligent and worldly, averse from serious things, with no relish for the service of God, or for the society of God's people, and seeking his happiness in the pleasures and profits of this life; and view the same man after he is properly informed and impressed, and has heartily submitted to the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, when he delights in what he formerly felt to be insipid, and makes his spiritual interests, which were once entirely a secondary, now his paramount concern; and say whether a change the most striking and the most important have not taken place, and say whether it be, either logically or scripturally, a misapplication of the term, to speak of that man as converted. I beseech you, my friends, not to quarrel with the term, for the term is scriptural, and still more earnestly do I beseech you not to quarrel with the thing itself, for the thing is essential. "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Lastly, There is here *a warning against the remains of unbelief in the people of God*. Zacharias was, on the whole, a believing and righteous man, but he did not believe this heavenly message, and therefore he was struck dumb. Now, it is not a full representation of the fact, to say that the grace of faith is imperfect in believers; for it must be confessed that they are often guilty of very unreasonable and very sinful instances of unbelief. The example of Zacharias is a proof that, in one way or other, they are made to suffer for such distrust. Sometimes they distrust the *providence* of God, and they are punished for that, yet in measure, and so as to remove their distrust at last. They begin to fear, perhaps, that they shall want what is needful for their temporal support;—instead, then, of immediately granting them supply, God allows them to fall into greater difficulties, and appears to desert them for a season; but when they cry unto the Lord, he hears them, and delivers them out of their distresses. They fear that they would be unable to bear certain trials: but, at once for the punishment and cure of their unbelief, God sends these trials, and brings them safe through them. At other times they distrust the *grace* of God. They do not firmly rely on the fulness and freeness of gospel salvation.

They ask, how can these things be? They doubt (however they may attempt to disguise it under the colour of humility), they doubt, and therefore dishonour the power and grace and truth of God, in reference at least to themselves. Such sin is not allowed to pass unpunished. It is followed either by outward or inward trouble. It brings, indeed, its own punishment along with it. The Lord hides his face, and they are troubled. They are perplexed, and go mourning all the day. Their heart is heavy, their countenance is sad, their hands are feeble, they become deaf to the voice of comfort, and they are struck dumb with silence, when their mouth should be showing forth the praises of their God. It is true, that when such rebukes have the effect of correcting their unbelief, and teaching them to credit a faithful God, they ought not to complain of them. It is true, that though God visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, nevertheless his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. It is true, that though they seem to be almost consumed by the blow of his hand, yet when he removes his stroke away from them, they will recover strength, and their lips will be opened, and they will revive and flourish and sing. And it is a most blessed truth, that the period is drawing on when unbelief shall be impossible,—when their faith, being lost in sight, and their hope in fruition, they shall never feel distrust, or heave a sigh, or utter a complaint, or shed a tear more. But, O my friends, instead of being any encouragement, or excuse, for unbelief now, these considerations are all calculated to convince ingenuous souls of its great evil, and to inspire them with dutiful confidence. If, then, we have reason to suppose that we have faith of vigorous growth, or even faith like a grain of mustard seed, let us never think lightly of the evil of unbelief. Let us recollect that if we will not believe, surely we shall not be established. Let us feel persuaded that if we be “of little faith,” our success will be small, our joy will be but comparatively feeble here, and our crown less brilliant hereafter. Let us beware lest there should be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, and lest we should even seem to come short. Let us endeavour not to “stagger at the promise of God through unbelief,” but to be “strong in the faith, giving glory to God.” And, according to that plan for this end which both reason and Scripture point out, let us often and earnestly direct our minds to the great objects of our faith, and the grounds on which they rest; and let us as often and as earnestly look up by prayer to the Father of lights, and say, “Lord, help our unbelief; Lord, increase our faith.”

LECTURE III.

LUKE I. 26-38.

“ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

THE only method of arriving at religious truth is, in dependence on divine assistance, to set our reasoning powers into vigorous action, and having ascertained the inspiration and the sense of the Holy Scriptures, implicitly to receive their dictates. Had, on the one hand, reason been kept in full operation, many absurdities and superstitions which have thrown a dimness and littleness on the actual aspect of Christianity, would have been unknown; and had there, on the other hand, been always cherished the spirit of honest and ready acquiescence in what the Lord (who surely best knows his own nature and ways) has been pleased to reveal, the Church would have been saved those baneful heresies by which she has been vexed and torn, and the melancholy fact had never occurred, of men holding to the name of Christianity, while all that is peculiar to it they are frittering away, and in one hour battling in defence of the outworks, but the very next with their own hands demolishing the interior. There is, perhaps, no subject in which the evil of substituting human speculation in the room of scriptural doctrine, has been so extensively manifested, as in that relating to the person of the Son of God. This has led some to reject, on the one hand, the Godhead of our Saviour—a heresy which, in conjunction with a kindred train, is held by not a few at the present day. This, too, was the cause why some rejected, in former times, the doctrine of the proper manhood of Christ; holding, on the principles of the Gnostics, that moral evil had its seat in matter,

and of course that the Deity could not be united to a human body, because he would be thereby contaminated. They held, therefore, that Christ was God only, having neither human soul nor human body; that his body, as we call it, was merely the semblance of a body, and that he suffered only in appearance, and not in reality, or some other person suffered in his room. But the Holy Scriptures, in as plain language as can be conceived, ascribe to Jesus Christ all the attributes of Godhead and all the attributes of manhood, sin only excepted; and it is ours not to oppose, or explain away, either the one or the other, but unequivocally to receive and maintain both. Both, indeed, are essential to our safety and comfort. Without his divine nature, where were his merit, his wisdom, or his power to save? Without his human nature, how had it been possible for him to suffer and to atone? The passage which we have now read begins the account of his incarnation, and shows how he, being God, also became man.

Having determined to raise up and to commission a suitable forerunner to the august Deliverer who was soon to appear, the Lord, as we had occasion to see in the foregoing Lecture, sent his angel to announce to the priest, Zacharias, that he was to have a son. His wife, Elisabeth, having conceived, remained in a state of retirement for five months, that she might avoid contracting any ceremonial uncleanness, as her son was to be a Nazarite, and that she might have the more leisure for meditation and prayer.

"In the sixth month" of Elisabeth's pregnancy, the same *"angel, Gabriel,"* was again sent forth from God, to forward another, and a most important, step in the scheme of mercy to perishing men. One of the noblest of the host, who stand by hearkening to the voice of Jehovah's word, and who, having heard the command, hasten, swift as the wind, on its execution; with what delight must he have speeded him on this *"high behest!"* On many an errand had the heavenly messenger been sent, but never on such an errand as this. To announce the intended incarnation of the Lord of men and of angels, and that for a purpose so astonishingly kind—to be the herald of hope, of light, and of rejoicing to a world lying in darkness, in misery, and in despair—how gratifying to the feelings of the holy and benevolent angelic mind! Swift as a shooting star he darted adown the sky towards this green world. Rejoice, ye dying children of men, at his auspicious arrival; or if *ye* are insensible to its importance, let nature, to rebuke you and bid him welcome, assume her loveliest attire, and break forth into joy all around the spot where he alighted. And whither and to whom does the angel bend his way? Not to imperial Rome, the mistress of the world, but to little *"Nazareth, in Galilee;"* not to any proud and titled lady, but to a simple and a lowly virgin daughter of Judah.

Galilee was a province of Palestine towards the north. It

was divided into the upper and lower; the upper being called Galilee of the Gentiles, as it lay towards the Gentiles, on the outskirts of the Holy Land. Nazareth was a city that lay in lower Galilee, and belonged to the tribe of Zebulun. It appears, that from their remote situation, their supposed comparative ignorance, their provincial accent, and such circumstances, the inhabitants of Galilee in general, and of Nazareth in particular, were undervalued, and somewhat despised, as incapable of anything worthy of notice, by those who lived nearer to Jerusalem. Hence, in part, the sayings, "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;"* and, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"† Nahum and Jonah, however, were Galileans; nor was there anything contrary to the prophecy, as to the place of Messiah's birth, in his having a certain connection with Nazareth in Galilee. It is well known that he was born, as prophecy required, in Bethlehem; but he was conceived, and he spent great part of his life, in Nazareth: hence he was called, by way of reproach, though there was no cause for reproach, "Jesus of Nazareth," and "a Nazarene."

The angel was sent "*to a virgin whose name was Mary.*" Mary, which was a common name with the Jews, and is so with us, is the same name with Mariam, or Miriam, and is first recorded as having been borne by the sister of Moses and Aaron. It is generally understood to signify *exalted*. Mary was "*espoused,*" that is, betrothed or engaged in marriage, "*to Joseph.*" It was customary with the Jews to enter into such engagements a long time before actual marriage, and they were minutely regulated by the law of Moses. A female, in this state, was considered the wife of him to whom she was betrothed, and the punishment for her infidelity was the same as though she had been living with her husband, namely, death. In short, a man and woman in this state were called husband and wife by men, and they were husband and wife in the sight of God.

Connecting the words, "*of the house of David,*" with their immediate antecedent, they affirm that Joseph was of that house. But they may be connected with the more remote antecedent—that is, with Mary. The fact is, that both Mary and Joseph were of the family of David, as will more fully appear if we shall be spared to consider the genealogy in the 3rd chapter. The outward circumstances, however, of the family were much more depressed than might have been expected in those who could show so illustrious a pedigree. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" said his unbelieving countrymen; "Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Joscs, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence hath this man these things? And they were offended in him?" And yet his being born in a low condition, rather than in a high, at once furnished a more striking proof of his condescension, and was by much the more favourable situation for rendering his

* John vii. 52.

† John i. 46.

instructions and example generally useful. Besides, by how much the more humble his circumstances, and the more complete his want of wealth, and power, and all worldly advantages, by so much the more astonishing was the wisdom with which he spoke, the power with which he acted, and the impression which he made; and by ~~so much~~ the more incontrovertible is the argument thence arising for the truth of Christianity.

When the angel came in unto Mary, he said: "*Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*"

Hail, that is, rejoice thou; or, joy to thee;—and the reason given is, that she was "highly favoured;"—she was so, no doubt, as a true believer, under the influence of special grace; but what is here chiefly meant is, the favour shown her, in being selected to be the mother of the Saviour. The Lord was with her, to protect her, and bless her, and to accomplish his promise in reference to her. And she truly was, and should be, esteemed and called peculiarly blessed, happy, and honoured among, and even above other women.

How preposterous is the interpretation of the Papists, by which they turn this address into an act of adoration! The word rendered "hail," was doubtless a common salutation; and though the word rendered "highly favoured," were rendered with the Latin Vulgate, which the Papists use, "full of grace," this would not materially alter the sense, for still the expression would imply that Mary had nothing but what she received, and it could not countenance the idea that she was to be a fountain or channel of grace to others, or be any excuse for the attempt to put her in the place of her Son, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that out of his fulness his people may receive grace upon grace. In fact, expressions the very same, or as similar as can well be conceived, are applied to many other persons in Scripture. Thus, is it said that she found favour or grace with God? the same is said of Noah, of Joseph, and of David.* Is it said to her, "The Lord is with thee?" the same is said to Gideon, to Jeremiah, and to Paul.† Is it said to her, "Blessed art thou among women?" it is also said, "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent."‡ There is nothing, then, said of Mary here, but what was said before of others—nothing indeed but what might very naturally be said by a superior to an inferior. It is difficult to imagine a greater absurdity than to suppose that the angel Gabriel, who was of a nobler nature than the human, and who had never sinned, should descend from heaven to worship a weak, sinful, and dying woman upon earth.

Can anything, moreover, be more conclusive on this subject than the consternation into which she was thrown by the angel's appearance and words? "*When she saw him she was troubled at*

* Gen. vi. 8, xxxix. 4; Acts vii. 46.

† Judg. vi. 12; Jer. i. 8; Acts xviii. 10.

‡ Judg. v. 24.

his saying." Was this the frame of mind which would have befitted one who deserved to be styled the lady of angels and the queen of heaven? Certainly nothing was further from *her* thoughts, at least, than to esteem the angel's courteous greeting and heavenly message as an act of adoration. She was troubled, as other human beings commonly were, at ~~the~~ *visit* of an angelic messenger, and she anxiously revolved in her mind what the exact meaning of his "salutation" might be.

Nor did he leave her long in alarm or suspense. He kindly bade her dismiss her fears, again told her that she had found favour with God—words which are explanatory of her being highly favoured, as before stated; and then proceeded explicitly to inform her of the wonderful instance of divine favour to which he particularly alluded.

"*Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus.*" He told her not only that she was to be a mother, but that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, whose most common name should be Jesus—a name descriptive of his office as a Saviour. In like manner, Matthew states that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, and directed him to call the son whom Mary was to bring forth "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." The same name was borne by the successor of Moses, and by the companion of Zerubbabel, as they were temporal saviours and types of Christ; but this was the antitype, the spiritual deliverer, emphatically the Saviour.

"*He shall be great,*" continues the angel; truly great, great in the dignity of his person, and character, and work. He "*shall be called the Son of the Highest;*" that is, the Son of God: for God is called "Highest," the "Most High," the Most High God." He was the Son of God in a way peculiar to himself; in respect, first of all, of his eternal procession from the Father, and then in respect of his miraculous conception; and he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead. And as he really was, so he was acknowledged and called, the Son of God. He was so called by the Father, who said to him: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." He was so called by Peter: "We believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." He was so called by the man with the unclean spirit: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" And he was so called by the centurion who witnessed his crucifixion: "Truly, this was the Son of God." He was the Son of God, too, in perfect consistence with his being the Son of man, as he is also often called; for though he was the eternal Son of God, he became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul; and he continues to be both God and man, in two distinct natures and one person, and will continue so for ever.

As a further illustration of his greatness, it is added: "*And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and*

he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

It has been already remarked that both Mary and Joseph were of the house of David ; hence Christ was the son, or descendant, of David. Repeated and express promises were made to David, not only that his son should succeed him in the government, but that his dynasty was to be perpetual. Thus, in 2 Sam. vii. 11 : " Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever"—" And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee : thy throne shall be established for ever."* Now, Christ, the Son of David, is represented as his successor on his throne, not indeed literally, or in the worldly sense, for Christ said : " My kingdom is not of this world ;" but in the spiritual or religious sense. David himself was a type of Christ, who is even called David : and David's temporal kingdom was a type of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Jesus is head over all things to his Church. He establishes his gentle sway over the hearts of his people, subduing them to himself, ruling and defending them, and restraining and conquering all his own and all their enemies. This declaration of the angel's bears a very favourable aspect towards the Jews, and indeed towards all the people of Israel ; for however obstinate the majority of them may be, it is said that Jesus shall reign over the house of Israel at last. Not that his empire will be thus limited, for spiritual Israel includes all who shall believe in Messiah's name. " It is a light thing," saith Jehovah to his Son, " that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel ; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." It is not, however, the universal extent, but the perpetuity of this spiritual kingdom, which is here foretold. And this perpetual sway was to be held by the Son who was to be conceived and born of Mary : " Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The Virgin Mary being thus expressly told that she was to have a son, felt, as might have been supposed, surprised, and at a loss to comprehend how it was to come to pass. Hence her question, "*How can this be?*" This question did not proceed

* See also Ps. lxxxix. 20, 21, 28-37.

from unbelief, nor was it a request for any sign; but it plainly proceeded from a desire to obtain further information, with the commendable view of knowing how she ought to conduct herself. Without finding any fault, therefore, the angel replied: "*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing*" (or offspring) "*which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" In the parallel passage in Matthew, this event is said to have been in fulfilment of the prophecy in Isa. vii. 14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;" that is, "God with us," for he has many names, and they are all very descriptive of his character. This most remarkable prophecy, which was exactly fulfilled, is justly considered as one of the most conclusive arguments that Jesus was the Messiah which can be employed against the unbelieving Jews, who accordingly exercise all their ingenuity to evade its force. It would lead us too far to attempt to obviate all the objections which they have raised. It seems proper, however, to notice the two principal. The Jews, then, and also most Socinians, deny that there was anything miraculous intended in this prophecy; holding that the Hebrew word signifies merely a young woman; but it has been satisfactorily shown, by a collection of passages which we cannot attempt here, that the rendering in our version is the only one of which the word admits. The other objection, and the one which appears at first to bear most weight, is this, that, as will appear from reading the whole chapter, the sign was given to encourage Ahaz and his subjects, when their land, the land of Judah, was invaded by Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel; the sign would have been quite unsuitable for that purpose, if it had related to something which was not to take place till upwards of seven hundred years after; and therefore that it must have referred to some child who was soon to be born. In reply to this, Christians remark, that it is quite common in the Old Testament for prophecies of the Messiah to be introduced into the middle of other matter, in order to comfort the Jews under their national calamities, and that this was obviously calculated to have the intended effect. Take, for instance, the prophecy of the Messiah under review. It was a proper remedy for the suspicion that God could not, or would not, deliver the land of Judah; because it implied God's power, and goodness, and faithfulness; because the promise of a Saviour was the foundation and pledge of all other mercies; and especially because this promise presupposed, and absolutely required, the preservation of the Jewish city and nation until the time of Messiah's coming, which showed that there was no occasion to dread utter ruin from Rezin and Pekah. It is probable, though not certain, that these words in Isaiah also refer to Immanuel: "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may (or until he) know to refuse the evil, and choose the good;" that is,

he shall be nourished on the usual food of the country, and grow up like other children. But as to the 16th verse, which runs thus: "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings:" though some are for referring this verse also to the Messiah, it must be confessed that a consistent explanation of it on this principle is attended with very considerable difficulties. Many, therefore, prefer the interpretation which would apply the 16th verse to a different child altogether, namely, to Shear-jashub. Isaiah says, in the eighth chapter and 18th verse: "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel." Both his sons were for signs. Of these the one was Maher-shalal-hash-baz, of whom we read at length in the 8th chapter, but to whom there could hardly be any reference in the 7th chapter. The other child was Shear-jashub, whom, as we read in the 3d verse of the 7th chapter, Isaiah was directed by God to take with him when he went out to meet Ahaz, and who must have been with him, probably held by his hand, or close by his side, when he uttered the prophecy concerning Immanuel. Now suppose that Isaiah, when he spoke the 16th verse, pointed to Shear-jashub, all would be plain. "Before the child," or, as the original would exactly bear, "before *this* child shall know," and so on; that is, before Shear-jashub, who was (it is supposed) a very young child, was much older, Judah was to be delivered, nay, the kings of Israel and Syria should be overthrown and taken captive by the Assyrians. It is further remarked, that if it was not for this purpose, it is difficult to conceive why Shear-jashub was taken out at all. In this way, too, a more immediate and nearer sign was given to satisfy Ahaz and the Jews in the meantime. And thus the 14th and 15th verses remain simply a prophecy of Christ, and of him alone.

Christ was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin, that he might be free from original sin; and yet his mother was a married woman, the wife of Joseph by the law, and in the sight of God, that in Christ honour might be put on the married state, and that he might escape the reproach of illegitimacy.

The angel having thus explained to Mary by what means the promised event was to be brought to pass, next states, for her information, and for the corroboration of her faith, the extraordinary, and indeed, in one sense miraculous, circumstance, that her cousin Elisabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy—a proof that what he had just foretold could easily be accomplished by God, with whom alone "*nothing was impossible.*" That is, he can do whatever he wills; every thing is possible with God which does not imply a contradiction in itself, or to his will; for any thing of that kind would be inconsistent with the perfection of his nature.

As soon as Mary understood the purpose of God with regard to her, she gave herself up to his disposal; and though her repu-

tation and her life were thereby endangered, she thus testified her cheerful acquiescence: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" On this the angel parted from her, having faithfully accomplished the gracious purpose which brought him to a world of distance and of rebellion; beyond what his embassy required, Gabriel would not prolong his stay, but hasted him back to the society of his kindred spirits, and to the beatific vision of his God.

In reviewing this passage, let us,

1. *Admire, adore, and improve the wondrous love and condescension manifested in the incarnation of the Son of God.* What a mystery in itself in some respects! yet how striking a display of the divine goodness, and what a call on our grateful adoration and praise! Marvellous grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich! Glory be to him, who "for us men, and for our salvation, did not abhor the virgin's womb." What an honour, too, was thus conferred on our nature, when he took on him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, when the human nature was taken into union with the divine—a union which, wonderful to think, is now seen, and will for ever be seen seated on the celestial throne with the eternal Father! Nor is this an event unconnected, or but slightly connected, with our hopes or our duties. It is peculiarly important in the plan of salvation. If he took part of flesh and blood, it was that he might be our Redeemer and our Comforter; it was that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death—that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. If he was made like unto his brethren, it was "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." This event is intimately connected with our holiness. The mystery of God manifest in the flesh, is well styled a "mystery of godliness." The Word made flesh, and dwelling among us, exhibited the glorious perfections of Deity for our instruction and imitation. The humility, too, which he displayed, is particularly and expressly pointed out as an example to us. "Let this mind be in you," says Paul, "which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself."

2. *We shall find it edifying and delightful often to dwell on the name which the blessed Virgin was desired to give her Son—the name of JESUS.* What a name is this! the whole substance of the Gospel lies hid in it. It implies that he saves his people *from* all evil, and to all good, and that for ever and ever. What name can bring light to the dark, or life to the dead, or liberty to the

spiritual captive, or pardon to the condemned, or sanctifying energy to the depraved, or comfort to the mourner, or peace to the tempest-tossed, or hope to the despairing, or support to the afflicted, or confidence to the dying?—what name, but the name of Jesus? Think over the names of all the great men, and all the good men of ancient and modern times, but this name far surpasses them all. There is a halo of lustre around this name when it is written, beside which every other name waxes dim. There is a sweetness in this name when it is pronounced, after which every other name sounds inharmonious. Ye who perceive not its beauties, who are insensible to its melody, and who have never felt its power to charm, you must be lying under the guilt of your sins, and under the dominion of the world's vanities. As to every thing spiritual, your minds must be dark as the grave, and your hearts hard as the nether millstone. Yet it is a fact that there is no name (and we are persuaded that you will not say that there is any name) given under heaven whereby you can be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus. Think, therefore, on this subject more seriously than you have hitherto done; and may you be enabled to receive him as your Saviour, and count all things but loss in comparison of the excellency of his knowledge.

3. The view here given of Christ as reigning on a throne should remind us of *the necessity of submitting to his government*. His reign consists in the actual submission of individuals to his grace and to his laws. However extensive his government, and however great its privileges, all will be of no avail to us if we be not among the number of his subjects. If we shall be so infatuated as to say, or to act on the principle, that we will not have this man to reign over us, he will at last say with regard to us: "As for those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." Let us, therefore, pray that he would mercifully bring us into captivity to the obedience of himself, and make us willing in the day of his power; and let us study, in all respects, to conduct ourselves as his loyal, obedient, and affectionate subjects.

4. *All Christ's people must rejoice in the assurance here given of the perpetuity of his reign.* "Of his kingdom there shall be no end." Daniel having predicted the overthrow of the four beasts, or four great empires—the Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman—thus foretold the establishment, on their ruins, of Messiah's empire, which was both to extend over all, and also to last for ever: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Many attempts have been made to subvert his kingdom, but all have

proved in vain. The learning of philosophers, the sneer of scorers, the power of princes, the allurements of seduction, and the terrors of persecution, have all been repeatedly brought to bear against it, but have been as often baffled. Infidels of the last age were not wanting, who predicted, that before this time the cause of Christianity would be ruined; but their predictions have fallen into disgrace with themselves, and either have perished, or remain a monument of their impiety and folly, while Christianity continues to flourish over their graves. Surely it is not exhibiting any symptoms of decay at present, but entirely the reverse. It is flourishing, and it will continue to flourish, in defiance of the plots of earth, and in defiance of the gates of hell. Let us rejoice at the thought of its perpetuity, and also of its coming universality; and let us prove, both by our words and our actions, that it is our heart's desire that the blessings of Messiah's reign may soon extend to every land, and then continue to gladden every people, till the kingdom of God on earth pass into the kingdom of God in heaven.

Finally. Rightly interpreted, there is something truly *encouraging* in the saying of the angel to the Virgin, that *with God nothing is impossible*. In the sense already explained, the aphorism is universally applicable; and its application to some particular cases is equally obvious and important. There are various things which men might despair of, were it not for the omnipotent arm of Jehovah. When we see some men so wedded to their sins, so habituated to all that is evil, so averse from all that is holy, so obstinately contemning all means for their benefit; we should be ready to say their conversion was impossible, or hopeless, and should thus sinfully desist from all endeavours for their good, did we not remember that the Lord of might has done many great things, and that he is still able to do all things. When we think of the deceitfulness of riches, and the snares of exalted station, and see some deceived and caught in them, we should entertain hardly any hope of them, were it not that, though their salvation be so difficult as to have given rise to the proverb, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," yet when our Lord had repeated that proverb, he added: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Sometimes the people of God may be ready to think that they are in straits, and difficulties, and dangers, from which they cannot be extricated. But this is to dishonour the providence and the power of God. "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" said the Lord to Moses, when he doubted whether so vast a multitude could be fed in the wilderness—"thou shalt see now whether my word will come to pass unto thee, or not." Let not the contrite and desponding think that they cannot be saved, that their sins are too heinous to be pardoned, or that it will certainly be impossible for them to hold out against their various temptations;—true, their ruin

would be inevitable, had they only themselves to look to ; but, behold, "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." Jesus Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him." Let us not doubt the possibility, or the certainty, of any thing that God has said he will effect. Why should it be reckoned, for instance, a thing incredible with us, that God should raise the dead? Our Lord shall "change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." What is there, consistent with wisdom and justice, that God cannot do? Is there any thing too hard for him? In a word, if we trust in our own strength, nothing spiritually good can be accomplished ; but if we trust in the Lord's strength, every thing good will be achieved. With us nothing is good, but through God every thing good is possible. Here, then, is the secret of the whole—namely, to renounce ourselves, and to rely firmly on divine strength. "All things," said Jesus Christ, "are possible to him that believeth." "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

LECTURE IV.

LUKE I. 39-56.

“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; 40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 42. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. 51. He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent away empty. 54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. 56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.”

THIS passage contains an account of the visit of the Virgin Mary to Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias. Having announced to Mary the divine purpose that she was to be the mother of Messiah, in a miraculous way, the angel, in order to strengthen her faith, and to convince her that the promise could easily be accomplished by that God with whom nothing was impossible, informed her that it was now the sixth month with Elisabeth, who was well stricken in years and called barren. Guided by a divine impulse, and struck, we may suppose, with the coincidence between Elisabeth's case and her own, and rightly judging that the visit would prove in various ways comfortable and useful to her, that it would increase her light, confirm her faith, and enliven her hope, and be the means of gaining her the friendship and countenance of two such respectable persons as Elisabeth and Zacharias, which would cause the account she gave of her state to be credited, and thus prevent injurious suspicions as to her character, “*Mary in those days,*” about that time, and soon after the angel's visit, “*arose and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.*”

Though the name of the city is not here mentioned, the description of its situation, and the circumstance of Zacharias, who was a priest, dwelling in it, render it sufficiently plain that it was Hebron. In Joshua, xx. 7, it is thus mentioned among the cities of refuge: “Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the

mountain of Judah." The journey from Nazareth to Hebron was of considerable length; some say forty miles. Having arrived at the city, Mary entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. We are not told what she said. It is the natural conclusion, however, from the whole bearing of the passage, that little was said by her, except what courtesy required, by way of introduction and salutation on such an occasion. It seems, therefore, that the sentiments which Elisabeth soon expressed were not at all the result of her own reflections on information which her visitor had communicated to her, but the result of immediate inspiration. She was led to interpret her extraordinary emotions and sensations at the time, as indicative of the arrival of her who was to be the mother of Messiah; and it is expressly said, "*Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*;" that is, she was immediately so filled by the Holy Spirit, as to be endowed with the gift of prophecy. In this, and such instances, was fulfilled the prophecy by Joel: "It shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids will I pour out my Spirit."

Under the influence of this inspiration, and in holy rapture, Elisabeth said, not in a whisper, but in a loud voice, as not ashamed, or afraid, but as glorying in what she was to speak: "*Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*" The first part of this sentence corresponds exactly with what was said by the angel. Doubtless, Mary was highly honoured and very happy in being the mother of him who was the Son of God, and who came into the world to rescue men from the most dreadful ruin, and to procure for them, and bestow on them, the most precious blessings. And blessed beyond all description and all human conception was the fruit of her womb; most blessed was he, and is he, in respect of the glories and the happiness of his nature, and in the prosecution of his most benevolent saving work. Most worthy is he to receive all blessing, and glory, and honour, and power. "Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." With regard, however, to Mary herself, it is proper to recollect that highly blessed as she was, as the mother of Christ, she was far more blessed as one of Christ's believers and disciples. When the woman cried out to him from the crowd, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," he said: "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." In thinking, or speaking, therefore, of Mary, we should avoid the extremes both of superstition and disrespect.

"*And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" In the view which Elisabeth here takes of Christ, she acknowledges both his divine and human nature. She acknowledges his divine nature and exalted dignity and power, by calling him Lord; and she acknowledges his human nature

by saying that Mary was his mother. Jesus Christ is indeed Lord; he is Lord of all. He is possessed of power to save, and of a right to rule. Elisabeth called him *her* Lord, thereby testifying her own submission to his grace and government. We, too, call him Lord, Lord; and we say well, for so he is. Let us see to it, however, that we do indeed individually submit ourselves to him. Let each of us, in the contemplation of his personal glory and mediatorial work, be enabled to cry out from the heart, "My Lord, and my God." And let us ever practically remember his own words: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

In this passage, too, Elisabeth expresses a feeling of most becoming and exemplary humility. "Whence is this unto me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?" In respect of outward station, there is every reason to think that Elisabeth was by much the superior of the two. She was the wife of a priest, who was not only of official respectability, but of much personal worth. Mary's parents, it is true, were of worthy character, and also descended from an illustrious house, but they were poor and little known. Elisabeth, however, deems herself highly honoured by her visit, and speaks of it as something far beyond what she deserved, or could have expected. In this she was, no doubt right, and evidenced the strength of her faith: and yet it was commendable to make the acknowledgment. True piety is always accompanied with true humility. "What am I," said David, "and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "I have need," said John, "to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" "I am not worthy," said the centurion, "that thou shouldest come under my roof." So Elisabeth, "Whence is this unto me? But, my friends, have not all believers at least as good cause for humble gratitude as she? Have they not also experienced, at least, as signal proofs of condescension? It is true, that Mary does not come to their house and abide with them for months: but Mary's Son comes to their door, and enters, and fixes with them his permanent residence. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me"—"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." What is man, that the Lord should thus be mindful of him, and visit him? God grant that we may be blessed and honoured with the fellowship of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, and enabled to regulate our dwellings and our hearts, as becomes the dignity of our heavenly guests.

Having expressed her sense of the honour conferred on her by the visit, and having also stated the emotions of joy which that visit occasioned, Elisabeth added:

“And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” This is a confirmation of what we already remarked, as to Mary’s happiness consisting chiefly in her being a believer. It is not unlikely that Elisabeth may have here intended an oblique, though, as was becoming, a tender and delicate, reference to Zacharias’ unbelief, which brought on him so marked a chastisement. As for him, he still continued deaf and dumb; he was unable to bid Mary welcome when she arrived at his threshold, and he was incapable of holding any oral conversation with her, now that she was an inmate in his family. But as for Mary, she at once gave full credit to the promise, and was, therefore, to have its fulfilment without any check or rebuke. This verse may fairly be considered as affirming the blessedness and the security of all believers. This blessedness in the most important sense may be ours. “Blessed are they,” said Jesus to Thomas, “who have not seen, and yet have believed.” “Whom having not seen,” says Peter, “ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” They are happy, indeed, who, interested in the promises, have to rely on the absolute certainty of these promises, and the unchanging faithfulness of God. Not one good thing shall fail them of what the Lord has spoken; but all shall come to pass.

After this account of Elisabeth’s inspired address to her guest, there follows what is commonly called the song of the Virgin Mary—a song so full and particular, so beautiful and sublime, that the paraphrases which have been made of it must be allowed to have failed of coming near the text as it stands in our Bibles—a song which seems rather to discourage than invite any lengthened comment, as if the true way to feel its beauty, and to enter into its spirit, were to read it exactly as it is. And yet we can hardly pass it over in this way, but feel inclined to linger over it, were it only to repeat some of its lines. Many of its sentiments will be found to coincide with those of the song of Hannah, in the 2d chapter of 1 Samuel; and though some ideas refer to what was peculiar to Mary herself, the general strain of the song may be taken up by every believer.

Mary being, no doubt, greatly animated by the congratulations in which she had just been addressed, and being also especially influenced by the Holy Spirit, breaks out all at once in the language of devout adoration and holy rapture: *“My soul doth magnify the Lord.”* Creatures cannot magnify God in the sense in which he magnifies them; they cannot, strictly speaking, make him great; they cannot add to his dignity. But they are said to magnify, or, which is much the same, to glorify him, when they confess him, and proclaim him to be great and glorious as he is, when they honour him in their life, and when they offer him actual worship and praise.

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” Soul and spirit are probably two words for the same thing, and teach us,

that the mind must go along with our tongue, and that we must praise God cheerfully, and with our whole heart and soul. We may observe here, too, that as Mary rejoiced in God, and did not rest in the honour done to herself, that, and that only, is true religious joy, when we do not make the mere sensible good the primary object of our joy, but God himself, and when we rest in him as our rejoicing. Mary here, also, rejoiced in God as her Saviour, in which character alone he can be contemplated with satisfaction by sinners of mankind.

“For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.” The word is properly rendered “low estate,” as referring to her outward condition. It would be contrary to the proper acceptance of the word, as well as to sound doctrine, to suppose that Mary, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, should speak of her humility of mind, or of any other qualification, as the meritorious cause of the honour which was about to be conferred on her. She had more true humility than to be guilty of this. She thankfully and humbly acknowledged that the Lord regarded her—that is, looked to her with an eye of favour, poor, lowly, and unworthy as she was. So, in general, the special favour of God is often extended to those who are in the humblest walks of life. So far is his grace from being confined to the wealthy and the high, that as their number altogether is but small in comparison with others, so the proportion of believers among them is also small: “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” This fact should be improved by those whose station in life is more favourable, to teach them not to trust in uncertain riches, or human wisdom, or human power, but in the living God; and it should be improved by the lowest, to teach them contentment under all their outward disadvantages, seeing that by far the most important blessings are equally accessible to them as to the greatest; and it should inspire them with gratitude, if they have been enabled to choose the better part, and thus to become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

Elisabeth had already called Mary blessed, but that was not enough—“*all generations*” were to call her so. Accordingly, she continues, and will continue, to be esteemed and acknowledged peculiarly happy and honoured. It is unnecessary to repeat here what has been already stated as to the extremes of disrespect and of superstitious and idolatrous regard.

“For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.” Where infinite power and infinite holiness meet together, great things may be expected as the result. It is very observable here, too, how Mary attributes all to God, and nothing to herself. She thus teaches future generations in what sense they were to call her blessed—namely, not as one who had

merited any thing at the hands of God, but as one to whom he had shown great grace.

*"And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."** After dwelling for some time on her personal reasons of gratitude to God, Mary takes a wider view of the subject, and glances at the displays of divine mercy, more or less clearly manifested, through a Redeemer, to God's people in all ages. While, in one sense, God's tender mercies are over all his works, and while his mercy, in the strictest sense, is offered to all offenders, his mercy is actually upon those who fear him. It is received in its pardoning and sanctifying energy by believers of all generations. It extended back to the first believer after the fall, and it will extend forward to the last believer, before the general conflagration.

"He hath showed strength with his arm." Speaking after the manner of men, the finger, or hand, or arm of the Lord, is used to denote his power, though it must not for a moment be imagined that God, who is a spirit, has any bodily shape or parts. "Thou hast a mighty arm," says the Psalmist; "strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. O sing unto the Lord, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Never, certainly, did the Lord do so great things for men, as when he sent his Son into the world to save them. The same power, too, which was exerted in this great and leading work, in general, must be engaged in our behalf in particular, if we are to expect to be saved. If we stand opposed to his arm, we must to a certainty be destroyed. If we are under its protection, nothing can harm us. May the arm of the Lord be savingly revealed to us, that we may be made willing in the day of his power; so shall he be our help and shield, and under his covert we shall be safe.

"He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Often had God, in former times, shown his power and wisdom in scattering those who, in their wickedness and pride, rose up against him, and in confounding the devices which they had framed in the imaginations, or reasonings, of their own mind: "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them." It seems, indeed, to be his usual method, in the course of providence, to disappoint the expectations of his enemies, to blast their projects, and to bring them into inextricable difficulties, by means of those very schemes by which they expected to carry all before them. He turns the counsel of many an Ahitophel into foolishness. But never were God's might and contrivance, in this way, so signally illustrated as in the method of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. The death of Jesus, on which wicked men and devils were so much bent, was the great means of the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness; and the scheme of free salvation is admirably suited both to promote the restora-

* We have almost the same words in Ps. ciii. 17: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting," &c.

tion of sinners to the favour and image of their Maker, and to stain the pride of all human glory. If, my friends, we would be saved, we must learn to give way before the wisdom and power of the God of grace, and to cease from our own wisdom, which, after all, is but foolishness. May the weapons, the arguments, and the influences which he employs, prove mighty to pull down all our mental strongholds, to cast down all our imaginations, and to bring our every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats," or thrones, *"and exalted them of low degree."* In illustration of the way in which these two contrasted truths were exemplified in ancient times, it may suffice, without quoting their histories at length, to mention, on the one hand, Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar; and on the other, Joseph, David, and Daniel. Occasional instances of a similar nature occur throughout the whole tenor of human history. The extraordinary exaltations and reverses which have occurred during our own times, must be fresh in the memory of most of us. All these we ought to view, not as the fortuitous result of mere human passions, and human agency, but as the orderly steps in a divinely arranged plan. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." It is likely that Mary had here an eye to herself being taken from a lowly station to be the mother of the Saviour. Often does God, in his kingdom of providence, advance persons of abject condition to situations of wealth, and power, and splendour: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dung-hill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." But this is the method which the Lord always follows in his kingdom of grace. In what state does he originally find his people, but lying in the dust of spiritual degradation, and defilement, and debt, and beggary? And it is from this forlorn condition that he, with his own gracious hand, lifts them up, that he may bless them with all the blessings, and honour them with all the honours of his favour, and make them kings and priests to himself.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." The sovereign goodness of God towards Mary herself was but a specimen of his general method of procedure both in providence and in grace. He often supplies the wants, nay, enriches the condition, of the literally hungry and poor, and he often reduces the literally rich to penury and distress. But it is in the spiritual sense that this declaration seems chiefly intended to be understood, and is most edifying. The rich are the self-righteous, who imagine themselves in possession of excellence of character, and of the divine power—who think they are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and poor, and

miserable, and blind, and naked. The hungry are they who are sensible of their ignorant, and guilty, and sinful, and perishing condition. If the rich, in their own esteem, condescend to apply to God at all, they do so in so proud and unbecoming a manner that he dismisses them without granting their request. But on the hungry—those who feel their need of Christ, and earnestly long for mercy—on those God bestows in rich abundance all the blessings of salvation. This is strikingly taught in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee did not come to ask for any thing, but in the spirit of pride thanked God that he was not like other men; the Publican came to ask all, knowing that he needed all, and he anxiously cried out: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” “I tell you,” said our Lord, “this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Let us, therefore, habitually keep in mind this principle in the divine procedure. In retiring to seek the Lord in secret, or in approaching into his presence in public, let us remember that he resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. Let us beware of the high look and the vaunting word, and even of the self-complacent thought, lest our services be sin, our presence odious in his sight, and our departure unblessed, and unaccompanied with any communications of light, or love, or holiness. Let us study to feel ourselves poor and helpless, as we really are, and also to long earnestly for the supply of our wants—to hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we may be blessed and filled. Let us draw near to God with humility and abasement; let us mourn before him the iniquities of our past lives, and the manifold sins and infirmities which still beset us; let us implore mercy with an earnest and a trembling heart; let us, according to God’s own appointed way, cast ourselves on his free grace, offered through faith in the atonement of his Son; let us abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes; and let us pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that he would fill us with the good things of his promises, and supply all our need out of his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. In this way, we may expect that there will come upon us the blessedness of the poor in spirit, and that ours will be the kingdom of heaven.

Mary concludes her sublime song in these words, verses 54, 55: “*He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*” Israel is here called God’s “servant.”* The word originally signifies, and might have been rendered “child,” or son: Israel was, doubtless, both God’s servant and son. Probably the word may be used here by way of endearment, as when God calls Ephraim his “dear son, and a pleasant child.”† In its

* *saída*, Acts iv. 25. “Eo die pueri tui mihi a te literas reddiderunt.”—*Cicero ad Atticum*

† Jer. xxxi. 20.

most comprehensive sense, the word "Israel" includes all believers in every age. Often had God helped Israel before, but the greatest help he ever sent him was when he sent Messiah. This he did in remembrance and in fulfilment of the promise made to the patriarchs, and especially to Abraham, in whose seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed. This was a promise of mercy for ever, of everlasting mercy which was to be upon all the believing seed of Abraham to latest generations.

Mary prolonged her stay with Elisabeth (verse 56) for about three months, till Elisabeth's full time was come, and then returned to her own home at Nazareth.

From this passage let us learn,

1. *To seek the society of the pious.* We have seen that Mary took a long journey to visit Elisabeth, and remained with her three months. We have also considered what passed between them on Mary's arrival, and there can be no doubt that the general tenor of their intercourse during the whole period was mutually delightful and edifying. Now, the example of two so honoured and pious individuals well deserves to be carefully considered and imitated. It is a great privilege, when it is the lot of pious persons to be permanently residing under the same roof with those who are of like mind with themselves. All who are thus situated ought to be grateful to God, attached to each other, and studious to be of all the use to each other they can. In addition to this, but especially where this is wanting, it will be found useful for Christians prudently to cultivate occasional intercourse with well-disposed persons who are not members of their own family. As to who these associates ought to be, by what means they should contrive to meet, how frequently their visits ought to be made, and how long protracted—these, and similar questions, must be settled by the good sense of the parties in each particular case. As to the propriety and utility, however, of such intercourse, generally speaking, there can be no doubt. Remember, my friends, that a sincere inward attachment to the followers of Christ, is one of the most intelligible marks of a state of grace. "We know," says John, "that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." And are not such persons highly deserving of your love and esteem? Are not the saints the excellent of the earth, in whom should be all your delight? And if you really esteem them as you ought; will you not feel inclined to seek their society? Such has been the practice of the people of God in all ages, and it would be well that it were still more attended to. "I am a companion," said David, "of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." When serious persons are met together, the example of Mary and Elisabeth teaches them how they ought to be employed. Let not the time be wasted on trifles: but needful and becoming attention being paid to the demands of courtesy and common life, let the concerns of religion occupy a prominent place in their conversation. Such

intercourse is most acceptable to God: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Such intercourse will be most advantageous to yourselves. It will be the means of your being better informed, for the "lips of the wise increase knowledge." It will operate as a check on all that is evil, and as a stimulus to all that is good. It will give an opportunity of comparing your experience, which will greatly encourage and edify you. "As face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man," and the heart of Christian to Christian. It will greatly comfort you and encourage you in the faith and obedience of the gospel. "I long to see you," said Paul to the Romans, "to the end that ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." It will elicit many a latent spark of affection and of zeal. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." It will support your minds under temptation, and steel your hearts with resolution to act a decided part in life; for it will convince you and keep you in mind that there are some of the same sentiments with yourselves, who are anxiously watching your conduct, and deeply concerned for your stability. Nor can you deem it a light matter that you will thus secure the countenance, the sympathy, and the prayers of the faithful. Cultivate such society, and you will find those who will be safeguards to you in the time of your prosperity, and who will not forsake you in the time of your trouble. The hour of sorrow, of sickness, and of dissolution, is drawing on apace—an hour in which worldly associates would withdraw, as conscious of their unfitness for such a scene, or, if they remained, would prove but miserable comforters; but an hour in which those who know and love the truth would delight to stand by you, that, as instruments in your heavenly Father's hand, they might suggest whatever might be comfortable and edifying, and assist in cheering you during the last moments of life, and in smoothing to you the pillow of death. Nay, seek the society of the pious, and there will then be formed by you a friendship which, though it may be for a short season interrupted in its exercise by death, will be renewed with increased endearment, where no infirmities shall ever trouble you, and where no separation shall ever divide you.

2. *Let us, from the example of Elisabeth, learn to rejoice at the superior graces and honours of others.* We have seen how Elisabeth, instead of feeling hurt by the superior honour conferred on Mary, or being slow to acknowledge it, rejoiced on account of it, spoke out strongly in her commendation, and declared herself highly honoured by her condescending to visit her. In

direct opposition to this spirit, we are too ready, by nature, to feel jealous and envious of those who excel us. Even among the disciples, there was a strife who should be accounted greatest. The Christian, however, must learn a very different lesson, however difficult that lesson may be. It is his duty, indeed, to seek to excel by his own exertions and by divine assistance; but he must beware of the wish to bring himself into notice by the failure of others, and he must carefully shun all discontent on account of their being distinguished for what is good. He is no worse that they are better; but he is the better for feeling and acknowledging their attainments and their worth. He ought, then, greatly to rejoice at their progress, readily to show deference where deference is due, and liberally to commend whatever may be deserving of commendation. "Be kindly affectioned," says Paul, "one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself."

Finally, *Let us accompany Mary in her song of praise for redemption through the incarnation of the Son of God.* Though there is some reference to Mary's individual case in this song, its general strain is quite suitable to all believers. It becomes those who have experienced the Lord's goodness to join in the cheerful note of praise. Let our souls also magnify the Lord, and let our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Here is a source of joy which far surpasses, and which will long survive, all other. Though the fig tree should not blossom, though all earthly comforts should flee from us, and all earthly troubles should environ us, still we may rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation. When in the midst of this song we think, too, as we ought, of our own great unworthiness, our admiration of the divine condescension will be increased, and the tones of our hymn will be accented. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever."

LECTURE V.

LUKE I. 57-66.

"Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called his name Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60. And his mother answered and said, Not so: but he shall be called John. 61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by that name. 62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. 66. And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him."

You will recollect the character, the age, and the circumstances of Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, as stated in a former part of this chapter, together with the account of the angel's appearance to Zacharias in the temple, to announce to him that he was to have a son, and the chastisement inflicted on Zacharias for his incredulity. You will recollect, also, the angel's first appearance to the Virgin Mary to announce to her that she was to be the mother of the Messiah. And you will recollect the visit of Mary to Elisabeth, together with what passed between them, especially Elisabeth's salutation, and Mary's song. It was the sixth month with Elisabeth when she was visited by Mary, who having remained with her for three months, returned home to Nazareth.

"*And,*" continues the historian, "*Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.*" Thus it happened exactly according to the angel's prediction; and thus shall every divine promise be fulfilled: "for God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

We are told that "*her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her;*" or magnified his mercy towards her, "*and they rejoiced with her.*" In this began to be fulfilled the other prediction of the angel, verse 14, that "many should rejoice at his birth." No doubt, that may also signify, that in consequence of his future usefulness as a prophet, many should have reason to rejoice that ever he was born; but it met also, in part, its accomplishment in the congratulations which Elisabeth's neighbours and cousins offered her immediately on

her son's birth. The circumstances of this case were, no doubt, uncommonly pleasing; but the addition of one to a family is in general an occasion which very properly calls forth the congratulations of their neighbours and acquaintances, and especially of their relations. Other near connections besides the parents are then usually congratulated. Thus when Ruth bare Obed, "the women said to Naomi," her mother-in-law, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, hath born him. And Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom." We ought not to omit to notice the spirit of piety which pervaded the congratulations in both these cases. They blessed the Lord, and confessed that he had showed mercy. It is to be feared that, on such occasions, there is often displayed the joy of natural affection and the civility of neighbourhood, with little or nothing of reference to the kindness of Providence. But are not such favourable events, mercies—great mercies? Surely, to overlook the goodness of God, then, is to be more like Pagans than Christians. The loving-kindness of the Lord ought then to be the first and principal thing noticed. Besides, when it is recollected that some children occasion their parents such vexation and sorrow, as to cause them rather to curse than to bless the day of their birth, it is but decent to look up to God that he would be pleased to render them a comfort to their parents, a benefit to society, and a blessing to themselves.

"*And it came to pass, that on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child.*" This ordinance was first instituted with Abraham and his family, as a seal of the covenant which God made with him and with his seed for ever. There was no divine command as to the person by whom, or as to the place in which, it should be performed. John being descended of the father of the faithful, it was necessary that, in his case, all the ceremonies of the law should be attended to, and all righteousness fulfilled. From all the circumstances of the case, we are left to conclude that the rite took place in Zacharias' own house. The friends and neighbours of the family who had congratulated them on the birth, as expected, and no doubt invited, came together to witness the initiatory ordinance.

It is said that "*they called,*" or rather, were calling "*him, Zacharias, after the name of his father.*" From this, as well as from the four following verses, it appears that the naming, or at least the formal announcing of the names of children, among the Jews, took place at their circumcision. Certainly, this was not strictly any part of the ordinance, nor was there any divine command to connect it with the ordinance. The fact was, however, that they did thus connect it; and the custom, very probably, took its rise from the circumstance, that when circumcision was originally instituted, God changed the name of the

father of the faithful from Abram to Abraham.* Commentators state, and, I presume, correctly, that there is no instance in the Old Testament of any child in Israel being called after his father. It appears, however, from this clause, that this had at last become common, as it still is with us. The friends on this occasion, no doubt, thought it would be a mark of respect to Zacharias, and would be peculiarly desirable, as there was no reason to suppose that he would ever have another son.

When Elisabeth heard this, however, she would by no means agree to it, but “*answered and said, Not so, but he shall be called John.*” This was the name, as we read in the 13th verse, by which the angel told Zacharias that his son was to be called,—a name very appropriate to the character and office which he was to sustain, as it signified, God is gracious. There is no occasion for supposing any further miraculous revelation to make Elisabeth acquainted with the divine will on this point, for though her husband was deaf and dumb, he may be naturally supposed to have conveyed to her a full account of his vision by writing. Having done this, we may suppose that, as his situation incapacitated him from taking any active charge, he spent his time in devout retirement and meditation, humbly and patiently waiting till the time of his chastisement should expire, and leaving to his wife the management of the whole affair. Elisabeth, therefore, resolved to keep to the divine command,—an example teaching us not to be swayed by the wishes of others when the will of God is clear.

The friends, however, were not satisfied with the name proposed by Elisabeth, and they disputed the matter with her, saying: “*There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.*” They intimated, that if he was not to have his father’s name, he ought at least to have that of some of his kindred, any one of whom would look on it as an honour to have so extraordinary a child named after him. As it was then, and as it is still with us, so it was very usual with the people of Israel, under the Old Testament, to give to their children the name (not indeed of their father, but) of some of their more remote progenitors, or living connections; and something of this kind, at least, the friends present on this occasion seemed resolved earnestly to press.†

To settle this point, on which a difference of opinion prevailed, an appeal was very properly made to the person who was best entitled to decide, namely, to Zacharias himself, whom they contrived to inform by signs that they desired to know by what name he wished his son to be called.

On this Zacharias asked, by signs, for “*a writing-table.*” It would be more curious than edifying to enlarge here on the different modes and materials of writing which have been used in different parts and different ages of the world. It may now be sufficient to say, that they sometimes wrote on tables, or, as

* Gen. xvii.

† See Elsner on this passage.

we should now rather say, on tablets, or flat and smooth pieces of stone, or wood, or brass, or ivory.

Some of these tables appear to have been very large, and others much smaller. This mode of writing on tablets throws light on such passages of Scripture as the following: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." (Prov. iii. 3.) "Now, go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever, that this is a rebellious people." (Isa. xxx. 8.) "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the table of their heart." (Jer. xvii. 1.) "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." (Hab. ii. 2.) "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ—written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (2 Cor. iii. 3.)

Having got a small table, Zacharias wrote on it, probably with a pencil, "*His name is John.*" Not his name shall be called John, or I now call him John, but, he is already so called by the angel of God, so that there need be no further dispute about what is already settled. On this the whole company " *marvelled,*" being astonished that both parents declined all of the names of their kindred, and fixed on the same name, and also being probably not fully acquainted with the circumstances of the vision.

Immediately after this, "*Zacharias' mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God.*" The angel had distinctly told Zacharias (verse 20) that he should be dumb only till "these things"—the things relating to the child's birth, which he had simply doubted of—should be performed or fulfilled. The event, indeed, rendered all further unbelief with regard to these things impossible. We may believe, however, that the continued chastisement had, under the teaching of the Spirit, produced the desired effect in humbling Zacharias under a sense of his sin—in curing his unbelief, and in strengthening in him a disposition of holy fear and dutiful obedience. There is some similarity between this history and that passage of Ezekiel in his 3d chapter from the 24th verse." With the view chiefly, no doubt, of punishing the refractory Jews who would not listen, but partly also, as some think, of chastening the prophet for his feebleness and backwardness, the Lord said to him: "Go, shut thyself within thine house. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear: and he that forbeareth, let him forbear; for they are a rebellious house."

The first use that Zacharias made of his restored speech was, as was most becoming, to praise God. Some think, and it may have been so, that what he said was merely the prophetic hymn that follows. It seems, however, more likely to others, that he said something else previously; perhaps thanked God for the mercy of a son, acknowledged the justice of the rebuke under which he himself had been lying, praised God for the recovery of hearing and speech, and stated to the company all the circumstances of his vision.

"And fear came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea." As might have been supposed, these remarkable occurrences were soon circulated throughout the country. In some they would excite only vacant astonishment, or guilty terror; but in others they would give rise to holy awe and pious hope. These circumstances, especially when thus widely reported, were no doubt of use to excite that curiosity which afterwards led such multitudes to flock to John's preaching.

When once heard, these occurrences were not likely to be either lightly thought of, or soon forgotten: *"All they that heard them, laid them up in their hearts,"* treasured them up in their memory, *"saying, What manner of child shall this be?"* They conjectured that the wonderful circumstances of his opening history, betokened that he was afterwards to become very distinguished.

It is not always that the anticipations which are formed from the promising appearances of infancy and childhood are realized. Not only does death often nip the early blossoms, but the anticipations are often proved by the event to have been the result of the partiality of friends, rather than of any thing really uncommon. "Samuel, who is his own biographer," says one,* *"has most judiciously drawn a veil over his infancy. Childish prognostics of future eminence are generally ridiculous and contemptible; they can impose only on the partiality of parental affection, or the credulity of superstition. The cynic snarls disdain at the relation of these premature prodigies of dawning wisdom; and the sage smiles indulgence on the fond belief."* These words are now quoted not with entire approbation; for, though there is doubtless much truth in them, there is also some asperity. Besides, though very sanguine expectations have been generally disappointed, many, perhaps the majority, of those who have become very eminent in advanced life, have given early indications of something great. It were easy to exemplify this from uninspired history; but we shall only refer to the scriptural instances of Samuel himself, of Moses, of Samson, of Timothy, and here of John. The high expectations and promising appearances in the case of John soon began to be realized; for it is said that

"The hand of the Lord was with him." The hand of the Lord

* Dr Hunter.

is put for his power; and when it is said to be with a person, or sometimes upon a person, it is to be understood in a very favourable sense. Here the expression implies, that the power of God was with John, both as to the watchful care and assistance of his providence, and as to the special and abundant enlightening and sanctifying influences of his grace. In language which is explanatory of this expression, David said, with reference to the building of the temple: "All this the Lord made me understand in writing, by his hand upon me;"* and he thus prayed: "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself."† The expression here teaches, that John was a healthful and thriving infant, and that as soon as he was capable of showing it, he manifested uncommon ability and piety, and whatever was hopeful. It is said, indeed, at the end of this chapter, that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit." So, in other instances where the Lord has had great mercy in store for individuals, or great things to execute through their instrumentality, he has guarded them and mightily blessed and prospered them in their childhood and early years. Thus it is said of Samson: "The child grew, and the Lord blessed him;" and of Samuel: "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child. And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men." And again: "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." In like manner, but in a higher degree than could be affirmed of any other child, of the progressive improvement of the human nature of the Saviour it is said: "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."‡ So, also, John prospered both in body and soul, and especially in knowledge and piety, beyond his years, and to such a degree as soon made it evident that in an extraordinary manner the hand of the Lord was with him.

Though not requiring much explanation, this passage naturally suggests several remarks of an edifying nature.

1. *The example of Elisabeth's neighbours and cousins teaches us to take a friendly and generous interest in the concerns of our own neighbours and connections.* There is a selfishness in which some habitually contract themselves within the sphere of their own little concerns, and become regardless alike of the joys and sorrows of others; and whatever may be urged in defence of this, it is very far from being according to the true spirit of Christianity. "Look not every man on his own things," says Paul, "but every man also on the things of others.—Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." This reciprocity of feeling is especially becoming in those who profess to belong to the body of Christ. The members should have the

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 19.

† Ps. lxxx. 17. *Θεὸς ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ*—Pindar, Ol. x. 25.

‡ Luke ii. 40, 52.

same care for one another: "And whether one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it." This mutual interest, as it is peculiarly natural, so it is peculiarly incumbent in those who are of the same kindred. Indifference here is a violence not only to religion, but to nature. A somewhat similar interest, however, is often excited in consequence of acquaintance and friendship formed by neighbourhood, occasional intercourse, and other circumstances in the course of providence. The Word of God acknowledges the importance, and cherishes the obligation, of such neighbourhood and friendship: "Better is a neighbour that is near," says the wise man, "than a brother far off. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" and, "He that hath friends should show himself friendly."

There are certain events which usually call forth a testimony of interest on the part of relations and friends. Thus, on occasion of a marriage, or a birth, they come very properly to rejoice and congratulate; and on occasion of a death, or other heavy affliction, they come to sympathize and to condole. On all such occasions, however, it becomes true Christians to study that their attentions be not entirely of a worldly cast, but have a prevalent religious tendency. Serious persons, instead of shunning, ought to cultivate this benevolent, disinterested, and kindly intercourse, as they regard their own duty and happiness, and as they would wish others to take an interest in them. This spirit of friendly intercourse, and of kindly attention to those personal and domestic concerns which are universally felt to be important, is almost essential in Christians, if they would desire to be of any use in things more directly religious. This is one of the ways in which they may please men for their good to edification. It is, however, the plain duty, both of those who receive, and of those who pay such attentions, to endeavour to turn them to the account of their spiritual good, as was well exemplified in the case before us. And while Christians should be ready to manifest this good will to their friends and neighbours, it seems also to be right that they should welcome and invite the good will and attention of their friends and neighbours to them. When the man in the parable returned from his successful search after his lost sheep, he "called together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." It is well worthy of the consideration of pious persons, whether they might not be of use, by studying to have some of their friends and acquaintances with them, at times when such society may be enjoyed, and such things seen and heard, as seem, under the divine blessing, likely to be productive of spiritual edification.

2. *The account here given of the circumcision and naming of John, suggests a variety of remarks on baptism and the naming of children among us.* The analogy which the vast majority of Christians consider to subsist between circumcision under the Old Testa-

ment and baptism under the New, is established, not only by the nature of the institutions themselves, but by the express language of Scripture. The language of the apostle to the Colossians (ii. 10), when left to speak for itself, is very explicit: "And ye are complete in him," that is, in Christ, "who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." In this passage, the apostle, in order to wean them from the ceremonies of the law, is showing the Colossians that they were complete in Christ, having all spiritual blessings, and also all necessary ordinances, in him; and more particularly that, though they had not literal circumcision, they had not only the saving change signified by it, but also another ordinance, namely, baptism, which, like circumcision of old, served to represent that change. Now, from the Jewish ordinance being administered in infancy, it follows that the Christian ordinance ought to be administered in infancy also, else Christians were not complete, but were inferior in this respect to the Jews. As to the various objections urged against the reasonableness of this doctrine, on the ground of infants being incapable of understanding, or giving consent to what is done, it is obvious that these objections, if they have any weight, would have been equally valid against the administration of the Jewish ordinance to infants.

There are distinct precept and example to show that baptism should be administered only by the ministers of the gospel. With regard to the place in which baptism ought to be administered, though there seems a peculiar propriety and solemnity in doing it in the house of God, yet there is nothing in Scripture to render it a point of conscience to confine it to the church, but rather express example to show its lawfulness elsewhere.

It has become the custom to announce the name in baptizing. It is to be recollected, however, that this is no part of the ordinance, and that without any infringement of Scripture we might baptize without mentioning any name at all. How very low ideas, then, must they have of the ordinance, who speak of this almost as if it were the principal point! There have been frequent instances of the parent saying to the minister, "I am come to ask you to give my child a name." What trifling with so solemn an ordinance! It is the parent himself that gives the name, the minister only tells what it is; and this abuse of the circumstance would be almost enough to make him refuse to mention the name at all. Parents ought to dwell on the essentials of the ordinance, and to consider the mentioning of the name as adventitious and subordinate.

The nature of the names, however, which Christian parents give their children, is not altogether unimportant. The name is most certainly considered as a mark of respect, or a compliment, to the person from whom it is taken; there is therefore, to say the least, an impropriety in Christians giving the names of heathen gods and goddesses to their children. It was, and still is usual, with converted heathens, when baptized, to lay aside their heathen, and to assume a Christian name: why, then, should Christians impose heathen names on their offspring? No doubt it may be said with truth, that these names are intended out of respect to those connections, or friends, from whom they are immediately taken; but it is obvious that they tend to keep alive the memory of those who originally bore them, whose very names ought not to be taken up into our lips, or if mentioned at all, mentioned with abhorrence. We do not mean to bring any very great charge against those who err in this respect, as we are persuaded they do not intend evil; at the same time, the impropriety is undeniable, and if the names were wrong chosen at first, why perpetuate them, when the change is in general so easy?

3. *The temporary unbelief and dumbness of Zacharias, find occasionally a parallel in the experience of many of the people of God.* Unbelief shut his mouth: faith opened it. He would not credit what the Lord told him, therefore he was incapacitated for declaring it: at last, however, he believes, and therefore he speaks. He was silenced for sin; but the chastisement having been effectual, his tongue is loosed to bless the Lord. Now, what is it which sometimes throws such a damp on the spirits of God's children, stops their ears, so that they are almost deaf to the sound of the glad tidings of the gospel, and arrests their tongue, so that they have not a word to say that is at all comfortable with respect to the grace and glory of the Redeemer?—what is it but unbelief or some other sin? Then, too, being conscious of having offended, and of having justly fallen under the divine displeasure, or being in any way greatly distressed, they are much in that state to which the Psalmist refers, when he says: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." It is well when they are then led to pray, "Deliver me from guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." And at last, when distrust gives place to confidence, and disobedience to submission, the gospel's sound salutes their ear with its wonted sweetness and efficacy; they recover the disposition and the capacity for praise, and each of them can thankfully say: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,

out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

4. *The conduct of those who dwelt around the place where Zacharias and Elisabeth lived, reminds us of the importance of carefully marking and remembering the various occurrences in the kingdoms of providence and of grace.* The people that heard these things "laid them up in their hearts," and were anxious to see the result. So also it is said of Mary, in reference to the child Jesus, that she "kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart." God complained of many of the Israelites of old, that they neither knew nor considered; and it is descriptive of irreligious persons, that they "regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Not to speak of positive contempt of the ways of God, there is a vacant and thoughtless state of mind, in consequence of which some "see many things but observe not," and allow most important truths and events to be stated, and to pass by unheeded, or soon to be erased from their memory. Instead of this, we ought to mark what is passing in the civil and religious world around, and especially what comes nearest to ourselves, and compare providences with promises, and study events in the light of Scripture, and thus endeavour to derive benefit from the whole. We should lay up in our hearts, and ponder well the words, and works, and ways of God; for this is the way to improve by what we already know, and to be constantly growing in the knowledge, belief, feeling, and practice of true religion.

Lastly, *Parents are here taught whom they are to thank, and to whom they are to look for the bodily and spiritual prosperity of their children.* If their children are healthy and thriving, this is no small blessing. Not that parents have no reason for thankfulness in the opposite circumstances; for often is the disadvantage of a weakly body counterbalanced by vigour of mind, or by dispositions peculiarly engaging. Nay, what pious and tender parent is not thankful for the *life* of his child, however feeble it may be, and does not even find his interest in it increased, his affections for it drawn forth, his prayers for it enlivened, and all his parental care and kindness for it redoubled, by the very circumstance of its delicacy, or its danger? Still however, if their children are healthy, parents ought by no means to forget to whom they are indebted. It is their duty, no doubt, to pay every reasonable attention to their health, but they must be aware that, with every precaution, there are many diseases and dangers which they could not depend on warding off. Let them give thanks to God, then, for his goodness during the past, and let them look to God, and trust in God, for the future.

With regard to the spiritual prosperity of children; if they not only are tractable and docile, but give evidence that they know, fear, and love the Lord, then their parents ought to re-

joy in this above every thing, and give the praise where it is due. Parents are here reminded, too, that they should be earnest with God that he would early begin to work on the hearts of their offspring. At the same time, parents ought by no means to forget to employ, with affection and perseverance, all likely means for the religious instruction and impression of their children. It is true that the hand of the Lord was with John; but when it is recollected that his parents were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, there can be no doubt that they attended to the duty they owed to their beloved son, and that their exertions were blessed. Should any fathers and mothers, then, whose thoughts may now be fondly turning to a much-loved child, feel as if they would ask, "What manner of child shall this be?" we would reply: Much, under God, depends on yourselves. You, by your dutiful attention, may be the means of training him for holiness and for heaven: or you, by your errors, or your neglect, may be the means of preparing him for ungodliness and for ruin. Labour, then, to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and you will have reason to hope, that your labour will not be in vain. Bring your good instructions, your pious example, and your secret and social prayers, to bear on the formation of his religious character; and then you will have reason to hope, that if he be spared with you, he will be spared for a blessing, or if he be removed from you in early years, he will be removed that you may have one tie less to earth, and that *he* may be far more holy, and far more happy than you could have made him.

LECTURE VI.

LUKE I. 67-80.

“ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant: 73. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, 79. To give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.”

WE have accompanied the sacred historian in his account of the conception, birth, and circumcision of John, who is usually called the Baptist. We have seen, too, how his father Zacharias continued, for his unbelief, under the divine infliction of dumbness, till the time when these things were accomplished; and how, while the company were assembled at the initiatory ordinance, and just after he had informed them, by writing on a tablet, what his son was to be called, “his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God.” It is probable enough that he may have spoken some things which are not recorded; but it is generally thought that the beautiful prophecy just now read was uttered by him on that occasion. John, then, having been born, and circumcised, and named, as already more fully described,

“*His father Zacharias,*” who was restored to the use of his speech, “*was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied.*” From the high character given of Zacharias, as well as of his wife Elisabeth, it is certain that he was previously blessed, in a plentiful measure, with the ordinary enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Spirit. Now, however, he was filled with the Holy Ghost in his extraordinary influence, by which he was miraculously inspired, like the holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In consequence of this divine impulse, Zacharias “*prophesied.*” To prophesy, signified both to foretell future events, and also to reveal, or, under the infallible direction of the Spirit, to expound the will of God. In

both these senses Zacharias now prophesied; for in what he spoke he foretold various things respecting John and Christ, and also expatiated most instructively on the nature and blessedness of salvation.

He begins with these striking words: "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.*" Jehovah is blessed for ever, as God over all—"the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" yet, because of the gracious discoveries and promises he made to certain of the human race, as the depositaries of his will for the good of others, it was proper that he should have some distinctive appellations which might serve to keep these discoveries and promises in view. Thus he is called the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and the Lord God of Israel. We are to recollect, however, that Israel, as a chosen nation, was a type of all the chosen people of God of every nation. Zacharias here pronounces God blessed—that is, actually gives him praise himself, and expresses his desire that he may be universally honoured and celebrated. This benediction, or one very similar, occurs repeatedly in the Word of God. "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem," said Noah.* When the people offered liberally for the temple, "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever."† In the same strain is the beautiful doxology in the 72d Psalm: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen." Taking the word "Israel" in this enlarged sense, we who live under the New Testament dispensation find these discriminating titles and praises of God very appropriate and instructive. More exactly, however, in accordance with New Testament ideas and language, is the apostolic doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Zacharias blesses God because he had "*visited and redeemed his people.*" The prophet here speaks of the merciful deliverance which was so near at hand—which was indeed already begun, and which would so certainly be perfected, as if it had already taken place. It is not the visit of anger, as when God threatens: "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" It is not such a visit which is here meant; but it is the visit of mercy—as when the Lord rescued the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, he is said to have seen, or regarded their affliction, and to have visited them and redeemed them. The visit, however, which was now made was for a far more important purpose: it was to redeem God's people, not from temporal, but from spiritual bondage—from the bondage of sin and Satan, and from that state of imprisonment and condemnation in which the violated law had shut them up; and the ransom which the Son of God paid for them was his own precious blood.

* Gen. ix. 27.

† 1 Chron. xxix. 10.

"Blessed be the Lord," says Zacharias, *"who hath raised up an horn of salvation for us."* Though this comparison has gone into disuse with us, it is sufficiently natural and expressive. The horn is the ornament, and the weapon both of defence and attack, of the creature that wears it. Hence it is used as the emblem of dignity and power in man.* Thus Moses says, that Joseph's "horns are like horns of unicorns"—that is, his power shall be very great. God is said to "cut off the horns"—that is, to destroy the power of the wicked; but he is said to "exalt the horn"—that is, to promote the glory and power of the righteous. This figure is frequently used in reference to the kingly power of David, and of David's Lord—especially in the two following passages in the Book of Psalms, where the amplification of ideas completely explains the meaning and the force of the figure: "I have found David, my servant, with my holy oil have I anointed him; with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted."† And again: "There" (namely, in Zion, or the Church) "will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish."‡ So Zacharias here blesses God because he had raised up for his people an horn of salvation—that is, a glorious and powerful Saviour.

This powerful Saviour was raised up *"in the house of God's servant David."* The genealogies by Matthew and Luke distinctly show that Jesus was descended of the tribe of Judah and family of David. David is here called God's servant, both as he was himself a good man, and as he was an eminent instrument in the hand of God for the temporal salvation of Israel; in which capacity he is also a type of the Saviour.

All this, relating to the commission, power, birth, and genealogy of the Redeemer, happened *"as God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."* That Christ was to be of David's family, was predicted virtually when Nathan told David, in 2 Sam. vii. 16, that his kingdom was to be established for ever; and more plainly in the 89th Psalm: "His seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." It might easily be shown, too, did need require, or time permit, that the Redeemer, in his coming, and character, and work, is the leading subject which pervades the prophets, from the first prediction relating to the seed of woman, down to Malachi's prophecy of the Sun of Righteousness. They

* In ancient times, among the Jews, as still in Abyssinia, kings and warriors sometimes had a horn of steel on their helmet. (*Bruce's Travels.*) A horn of silver was also worn as an ornament by persons of both sexes.

† Ps. lxxxix. 20.

‡ Ps. cxxxii. 17.

wrote of Christ, and "testified beforehand of his sufferings, and of the glory that should follow."

Zacharias further declares, that, as the prophets foretold, so the result was evidently to be, "*That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.*" In reference both to the type and the anti-type, the Holy Ghost thus speaks in the 89th Psalm: "Thou spakest in vision to thine Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him." The carnal views of the most of the Jewish people, led them to interpret such passages in reference to temporal deliverances merely, and to expect more particularly from Messiah, when he should appear, their deliverance from the Roman yoke, and the establishment of the Jewish nation in independence, power, and splendour. It is very obvious, however, that whatever providential protection was to be extended to the Church as a body, the chief thing intended by such declarations was, the deliverance of individual believers from their spiritual enemies—sin, Satan, and the world—by redeeming grace.

And this was in order (verse 72) "*to perform the mercy promised to the fathers.*"* The word "promised," which is supplied in our translation, makes a very obvious and complete sense. Leaving out that word, the clause would be, "to perform mercy to, or with our fathers." This may teach us, that the blessings of the salvation actually purchased by Christ, extended backwards to the patriarchs, and in general to all believers who lived in the Old Testament times. Nevertheless, the mercy was then less clear, and, generally speaking, less full; so that the actual coming of Christ might be said to perform or complete it.

Thus, too, did God appear "*to remember,*" to be mindful of, so as fully to act upon, "*his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham.*" The substance of the covenant God made with Abraham was contained in these words, Gen. xvii. 7: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee." This covenant was thus at first given in the way of a promise, or simply by the word of God. Afterwards, however, it was established by the oath of God. Gen. xxii. 16: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore: and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies: and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." We read, too, in the 89th Psalm: "Once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David." The apostle, in writing to the

* ποιησαι ελεος μετα των πατερον.

Hebrews (vi. 16-18) in reference not only to the original covenant with Abraham, but to the firm foundation of hope laid to all believers, has these words: "Men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things," God's promise and oath, "in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

The purport of the covenant by oath is further declared to have been, that God "*would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*" Thus by Zacharias, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we are taught that the chief blessing intended in the covenant with Abraham, was not temporal power and splendour to his descendants after the flesh, but, as already stated, deliverance to his spiritual seed from all their spiritual enemies—salvation from sin in its guilt and power. Though they were to be freed from the spirit of bondage, and of fear, yet they were not to be set loose from religious and moral obligations, but to be bound and enabled to serve God in holiness, or in the exercise of those religious duties which relate more immediately to God; and in righteousness, or in the exercise of justice and every virtue they owe to their fellow-creatures: and this service they were to perform "before him," as in his presence, remembering that he was their witness, and would be their judge; and that too, not unsteadily, or for a time, but all the days of their life.

Hitherto Zacharias had spoken of Messiah, but in what follows he speaks of his own son John; and blesses God for the work of preparation through him. Having expressed himself, as in the foregoing verses, in language of praise to God for the deliverance which he considered as accomplished through a Redeemer, Zacharias turns towards his infant son, and says:

"*And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest.*"* Prophecy had now ceased from the days of Malachi,—a period of about four hundred years. It was to revive, however, as to some degree in others, so especially in the person of John. He was called, as he really was, a prophet, not *the* prophet, not Messiah, but a prophet, nay, one distinguished beyond other prophets. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."* We are informed, too, that he was generally acknowledged as a prophet. It is said that when Herod would have put John to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.† "The Highest," or the Most High, is a name peculiar to Jehovah, and yet

* Luke vii. 26.

† Matt. xiv. 5. See also Matt. xxi. 26; Mark xi. 32.

it seems to be here given to the Son of God, who is indeed "the mighty God—God over all, and blessed for ever;" and who is called "the Lord" in the next clause. John was the attending prophet of Jesus, somewhat as Aaron was of Moses.

Thou shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: "*for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.*" The two following Old Testament predictions, though familiar to almost every one, must here be noticed. Isa. xl. 3-5: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Mal. iii. 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." This language is borrowed from the circumstance of kings and commanders, when they march in stately procession, or at the head of armies, employing pioneers to clear their way. These pioneers move a considerable way in advance of the main body, and are armed with spades, and hatchets, and pickaxes, and the like. Where the road is bad, they repair it; and where there is no road at all, they make one. They cut a passage through hedges and woods, and remove or demolish any artificial obstructions which may have been thrown up by the enemy. They throw bridges over streams and ravines, they fill up hollow places; and hills which are too steep they level down. There is reference also to harbingers to call to others to clear the way. Thus John the Baptist was appointed to go before, and to prepare the way for Christ. The preparation he made, however, was of such a nature as suited a King and Conqueror, whose kingdom was not of this world, and whose victories were bloodless. John was to endeavour, by his preaching, to instruct and impress men so far, that they might not be altogether unprepared for the ministry of Christ, but ready to profit by his teaching, and to receive him as their Lord. Zacharias explains how John was to prepare the way, when he adds, that he was

"*To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God.*" He was to give the people some idea of the necessity and method of salvation, that they might know what to expect from Jesus Christ, and that, by being so far trained, they might be fit to be advanced into a higher school. Accordingly, we find that John's ministry was adapted, and actually effectual, for that purpose. He insisted much on the doctrine of repentance. Thus he began by endeavouring to convince men of sin, and to bring them to make confession. They "were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." He taught, too, the necessity of renouncing sin and

of bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance." At once to show them the necessity of this, and to afford them an inducement to it, he assured them that the kingdom of heaven, or the gospel dispensation, was at hand. Nor, while thus labouring to convince of sin, did he overlook the gospel way of obtaining pardon. He would not permit his hearers to stop short and be satisfied with what he himself had to say, or indeed to rest in him or in themselves at all. He was constantly urging them to look forward to a greater personage than himself. And when Jesus' public ministry commenced, John bare witness, in as plain words as possible, to the method of justification through the atonement and by faith, when he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him."* And John was further to teach, that this method of pardon and salvation was "through the tender mercy of God." The expression, "tender mercy," or "bowels of mercy," which is frequently found in Scripture, is here well used to denote the free, strong, and matchless compassion of God, in saving sinners through Christ.

"Whereby," it is added, that is, through the same tender mercy of God, "*the day-spring from on high hath visited us.*" The day-spring, or rising of the sun, "from on high," is here to be understood in a religious sense; it is, as we might call it, the dawning of a heavenly day. There is a Hebrew word† which admits of being translated either a Branch, or the East, or Rising of the sun. It is twice used by Jeremiah, and twice by Zechariah, as a proper name of Christ.‡ In all these places it is rendered in our English version, "The Branch;" but in the Septuagint, or Greek version, it is rendered by a word which signifies the East, or Sun-rising. In this latter sense it is beautifully descriptive of the coming and of the office of the Redeemer, who is called by Malachi, "The Sun of righteousness," and by himself, "The light of the world;" the dawning of the day, it may also be remarked, is a more exact description of the state of things at the time Zacharias spoke them, than if he had compared it to the full light of day.

Messiah, that glorious day-spring from on high, "hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." This is the great purpose for which the Saviour came, or the day-spring visited the world. "I will give thee," said the Lord, by Isaiah, "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Though the darkness of the Gentile world was peculiarly great, the Jews also were, in general, in a state which was little less deplorable.

* John i. 29, iii. 36.

† ἡ ἀνατολή.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12.

Christ is indeed stated to have fulfilled the prophecies relating to him as an illuminator, when he preached within the territories of Israel. Thus we read in Matt. iv. 13-16: "Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles"—that is, bordering on the Gentiles—"the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." The ignorant, guilty, and miserable state of all men by nature, whether Jews or Gentiles, is compared to that of condemned criminals shut up in a dark and dreary dungeon, or sunk in the gloomy shades of death and the grave. To such the Saviour gives light. He gives them the light of instruction, showing them how they may obtain forgiveness. He gives them the light of comfort, dispelling their fears, and inspiring them with hope and joy. And he gives them the light of direction—"to guide their feet into the way of peace"—to show them the way of peace with God, peace with their own consciences, and peace with mankind. His word is a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path, to enable them to walk in the pleasant and peaceable ways of wisdom here, that they may reach the abodes of everlasting peace and joy hereafter. In short, we have here a plain description of the blessed effects of the Gospel, together with a remarkable prophecy of its diffusion throughout the Jewish and Gentile world.

Thus ends Zacharias' sublime song. In reference to the further progress of John himself, Luke adds:

"And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel." "He grew;" his bodily frame increased. He "waxed strong also in spirit;" his mind was uncommonly vigorous—his judgment and other powers were clear and lively, and his courage was great. His spiritual or religious state was also prosperous. His faith was strong, and his reason and conscience, enlightened and purified, regulated his conduct. As the angel predicted, he was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb." We have no very particular account of the transactions of his early years. It is likely that his parents, who were both advanced in age when he was born, died before he reached manhood. The hand of the Lord, however, was with him: he continued to live, as it is here expressed, "in the deserts"—not in absolute seclusion from society, nor in places totally uninhabited, but very much in retirement, and in some of the least populous and most sequestered parts of the country. And he never appeared openly, so as to attract any notice, "till the day of his showing unto Israel"—till the time that he stood forward to preach and baptize as Messiah's forerunner; and this was when he was about thirty years of age. Several important advantages attended

this providential arrangement of his life. The length of time he spent in retirement, meditation, and prayer, and under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, gave him an opportunity of gradually ripening for usefulness, and for preparing to come forward with great energy, ability, and success. His mode of life—for he had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey—his mode of life, which was self-denying and austere, was calculated, according to the ideas natural to those who were under the legal dispensation, to inspire men with a high opinion of his sanctity, and with reverence for his person, and thus to induce them the more readily to listen to his exhortations. Besides, in consequence of his seclusion, his testimony to the divine mission of Jesus Christ became altogether beyond suspicion, and perfectly conclusive. It cannot be pretended that John formed his opinion from his intercourse with Christ in early life; for he had no such intercourse. It cannot be pretended that they conspired together to impose a delusion on the world; for they had no opportunity of conspiring. Nay, Jesus was not even personally known by John till he came to ask John to baptize him. Then John appears immediately to have known him by a divine suggestion, which was afterwards fully confirmed by the sign which he was led to expect. These are the words of John: "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me. And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."*

Thus, by retirement and divine grace, John was admirably qualified for the important and difficult ministry to which he was at last called. In like manner, those who are preparing for public usefulness in the Church, ought to live for years in a state of comparative retirement from the world, spending the greater part of their time in private study, and especially in reading the Word of God, in devout meditation, and in prayer. And they should wait patiently till the Lord shall be pleased to give them a call to some situation, in which they may contribute to promote the glory of God and the good of men.

If the Lord will, we shall hear of the public life of John afterwards. In the meantime, "*let us join his father in his song of praise for that great deliverance of which John was the harbinger.*" The blessings here celebrated were not confined to Jews, but are common to all God's people. All to whose heart the gospel has come with power, have been graciously visited and redeemed.

* John i. 30.

The horn of salvation is as glorious and as strong as ever; the Redeemer still proves himself mighty to save. The prophecies which have been since the world began are still read by the Church, and their fulfilment is still seen and experienced. God's mercy is as free, his covenant is as sure, and his promise and his oath are as much in force, as when first given. Salvation is ever the same in substance, and much the same in its form and means. With the New Testament ordinances complete, we still enjoy the benefit of the Baptist's ministry, who, in the historical narrative of his labours, is still to be considered as calling us to repentance, giving us the knowledge of salvation, and of remission of sins, and directing us to "behold the Lamb of God," that we may believe and have life everlasting. For all this, then, let us bless the Lord God of Israel. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord."

Again: *It becomes us to be thankful that the light of the gospel has visited our own land in particular.* "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us," whose ancestors were literally sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death—sunk in ignorance, idolatry, impurity, and misery. We ought to recollect, however, that as the Jews in Galilee needed to be savingly illuminated, as well as the Gentiles of more distant lands, so *we* need something more than the mere external light—something more, too, than human teaching, and a mere notional religion. If we are to be benefited by the light, we must not neglect it; it must be suffered to shine into our hearts. "We have a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts." The gospel must, in every individual case, have the effect of opening our eyes, of "turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may obtain forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus." We must attend also to the practical effect of the light, that we may "walk in the light," and that it may be manifest that "our deeds are wrought in the light."

Intimately connected with this is the leading lesson read in what Zacharias says in regard to the practical end of gospel salvation; it is, "That we, being *delivered* out of the hands of our enemies, may *serve him* without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." Have we, then, obtained such a deliverance from our spiritual enemies? Are we freed from the thralldom of sin, Satan, and the world? If the Son have thus made us free, then are we free indeed. Let us stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. We must

also carefully observe, that those who have obtained this glorious liberty are not set loose from the obligation of duty, but are thereby under the stronger ties to it, and indeed are enfranchised for the express purpose that they may be at liberty to serve God in righteousness and holiness. "Truly I am thy servant," is the confession of the Psalmist, and *that* at the very time when he says, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Being "made free from sin," believers become "the servants of righteousness." The view here given of this service, as being "before God," is at once a necessary qualification of our service, and a powerful inducement to it. All must be done in reference to his will, and as in his presence; and what better calculated to stimulate us to proper action, than to remember that he is our witness, and will be our judge? Nor must our service be for any limited period. It must be for all the days of our life. If we draw back, God will have no pleasure in us; whereas, if we endure to the end, we shall be saved.

But, finally, the most remarkable qualification of the Christian's service here stated is, that it is to be *without fear*. This may refer, in part, to the external peace and security which Christianity brings along with it, when men sit under their own vine and fig tree, without any to make them afraid. But the chief reference is doubtless to that internal state of mind which true religion produces. There is a fear which is due to God, and which is enjoined as essential—the filial fear—the fear of holy reverence—the fear of offending. This is a gracious habit wrought in the soul, and it is even sometimes put for the whole of religion. There is, however, another kind of fear which is improper—slavish fear, that fear which arises from the consciousness of guilt unpardoned and cherished—the fear of alarming terror. Such a fear Felix laboured under when he trembled, but held fast his iniquity. Such a fear is dishonourable to God, as it represents him as a being rather to be shunned than sought. Instead, therefore, of being acceptable to him, it is itself a sin, and must occasion the rejection of all services which proceed from so unbecoming a principle. The view which believers are enabled to take of God is very different. They regard him, not as an enemy, but as a friend; and therefore, whatever services they render, he accepts as from friends. Deliverance from this terror is indeed necessary, in order to have any heart or spirit to serve God. Under its influence men's hearts are pressed down—their energies are benumbed—their hands are powerless, and their feet enfeebled. But when they have confidence towards God, and peace of conscience, the heavy load is rolled from off them; their minds are borne up with cheerfulness and joy. In common life, they run in the ways of God's commandments, when he enlarges their hearts; and in religion, they are then capable of true devotion when they have received, not the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.

Think of this, my friends. As you would desire to feel at all comfortable, and to make any attainments in true piety and virtue yourselves, and as you would desire to be able to do any thing acceptable to God, think of this. Be persuaded that you must first of all be at peace with God, and be brought to delight in him as your Father and your friend. And be equally persuaded that the way, and the only way, in which this terror can be allayed, and this child-like confidence inspired, is through the belief of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Think, my friends, and think well, whether you lie not still under this enslaving and deadening influence. This fear may not, indeed, have reached such a height as to appear to others in the outward symptoms, or to be expressed to others in the affrighted language of dismay; nor may it so sensibly and irresistibly affect your own mind as to have entirely unhinged you, and to have deprived you of all power of rallying your resolution, and assuming a false courage. Yet may it effectually and fatally bear sway in your mind, in a secret apprehension, which you are hardly willing to acknowledge, but which you may feel habitually and busily at work within you—a feeling partaking as much of the nature of aversion as of terror, arising from the consciousness that you are justly exposed to the divine displeasure, filling you with many misgivings of heart—causing you actually to dread the idea of meeting God in judgment—nay, causing you to dread the idea of meeting him on earth—to dread, not probably to present yourselves externally before him in the midst of a crowd of associated worshippers, but to dread the idea of meeting him in the clear manifestation of evangelical truth—in the retirement of your own heart—in your individual character—in the unreserved communications of a spiritual intercourse—in the penetrating light of his holy Word, and in the effectual dealings of his mighty hand. If this be your feeling, then no further proof is necessary of your being in a state of complete alienation from God. Thanks, however, be to his name, that his love, manifested in giving his Son to die for your sins, and in proposing to you, as he does at this moment, the acceptance of life and salvation, is such as, if it shall be understood and believed by you, will be quite sufficient to dissipate your fear, and to inspire you with reciprocal love and confidence. Do become so wise for yourselves as to dwell much on this subject, and earnestly to pray that God would grant unto you, as it is here expressed (for it is his own prerogative to bestow this holy boldness), pray that he would grant unto you to serve him without fear, and to delight in him as your strength and your portion.

And let those of you who have the proper reverential fear of God, guard against this slavish fear. It is his gracious wish, beloved, and it is his express command, that you should no longer look on him but as your best friend. “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a

sound mind." Your own duty and happiness, and a regard to the credit of vital religion, require that you should possess and exhibit this spirit of cheerfulness and confidence. Well do we know, from the divine testimony, that you have no reason to cherish any other spirit; and well do we know, from human intercourse, how important it would be for yourselves, and all who know you, that you should live under the influence of this spirit. "Wait, then, on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name: thou art mine. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will support thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Do justice, then, to the benignity of that merciful God whom, with all your imperfections, it is your fondest wish to serve. Do justice to that compassionate Redeemer, who became a man of sorrows that you might be, not melancholy and affrighted, but happy and of good courage. Do justice to him whose most delightful name is the Comforter, and who waits to restore to you the joys of salvation, and to bless you with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Do justice to yourselves, and do not rob yourselves of your best support in trouble, and your best incentive to duty. Do justice to your fellow-men, and do not throw a stumbling-block in their way, and deprive them of one of the most winning illustrations of the happy effects of the gospel. Piously and gratefully assert and maintain the true Christian character of dutiful obedience, and holy boldness: and may the Lord himself enlighten in you that which is dark, pardon in you that which is guilty, take away from you that which is sinful, supply in you that which is wanting, heal in you that which is sick, strengthen in you that which is weak, and bind up in you that which is broken.

LECTURE VII.

LUKE II. 1-7.

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapt him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

It has frequently happened, especially on continents, that a man has been born and bred, and has arrived at maturity, without ever having seen the sea. And most of us may have read, or heard, how, after mountains and rivers crossed, and days of fatiguing journeys accomplished, such a person has felt and acted, when at last the mighty ocean has broken on his view. Lost in wonder, he knows not what to think or what to say, and remains for a while rivetted to the spot. He then makes haste to get down to the very seaside, nor slackens his pace till he tread its beach, and dip his foot in its briny flood. But then, how profound his astonishment! He has often seen waters before, but never such waters as these. What sublimity, whether in its peaceful stillness, the sea present the appearance of a glassy mirror reflecting the high land, and the clouds, and the sun, or in its roaring and tempest-tossed element, heave up the mountains, and scoop out the valleys of its raging waves! And then, as his eye traces it for leagues and leagues, till it is lost in the horizon, what an overwhelming idea has he of its vast extent! He is absorbed in inward rapture: his countenance speaks the sentiments which his tongue could but ill utter; and his hands are raised to heaven in silent but expressive wonder. And if he be a man whose mind is illumined with the light of true religion, what a vivid impression has he then of the majesty of that Being who created the sea, as well as the dry land, and who measures the water in the hollow of his hand! But how different is it with many, at least, of those who have been born, and have lived for years within sight, or within a short distance of the sea! Accustomed to behold it from their infancy, to them it is an uninteresting, every-day object, and to them its wonders are no wonders.

In like manner it is that, in reference to religion also, familiarity has often a very prejudicial influence in diminishing to us the interest of the most astonishing events, and the most

sublime doctrines. In the whole range of Christian contemplation, there is not a more wonderful event than the incarnation of the Son of God. It is as striking an object of contemplation in the kingdom of grace, as is the ocean in the kingdom of nature. And yet (to say nothing of those who obviously treat divine things with total neglect) with what indifference do many of us, who profess to receive the gospel, often read and hear of this mysterious and most astonishing display of divine love and condescension to our perishing race! One reason of this is, that we are familiar with it: we have heard of it a thousand times, there is nothing of novelty in its face; and oft as the idea enters into our thoughts, as often can we suffer it to depart without its having made any considerable impression. It is but rarely indeed that it now excites in us feelings so lively, and so tender, as it did when, in the days of our childhood, its knowledge first made its way to our understandings and our hearts, from a mother's lips, as she repeated to us the plaintive and soothing verses of the "Cradle Hymn." Still, however, on many its influence is considerable, though not on any to the full degree that is to be desired: and it is to be hoped, that to not a few who have never considered it attentively, it will yet come home with power. Certain it is, that if familiarity with it have produced comparative indifference, the cure is not to be found in contemplating it less frequently. On the contrary, we should keep it as much as possible before our minds; and at the same time endeavour, by God's assistance, to enter more minutely and more deeply into its nature, and into the bearing which it has on our own individual hope and destiny. God grant that this happy effect may be promoted, as we accompany the evangelist Luke, in his beautiful and interesting account of the time, and place, and other circumstances of the Saviour's birth.

The evangelist begins with stating generally *the time* of this extraordinary event; in doing which, he touches slightly on the civil history of the period, and mentions the issuing, and the effect of a particular imperial edict: "*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*" The personage here mentioned occupies a very remarkable place in the Roman history. To his name, Octavius Cæsar, was added the epithet Augustus, or the August, because of the high renown and dignity to which he was raised by his successful exploits. He was the second of the twelve Cæsars, and (as Julius Cæsar obtained only the title of perpetual Dictator,) the first Roman emperor; which high dignity he reached, after having overcome his rival, Marc Antony.

The emperor Augustus issued "a decree that all the world should be taxed." With regard to the nature of this taxing, as it is here rendered, the word taxed now conveys the idea, rather of what was generally the result, than of what was the precise nature of the measure. The word would be literally rendered, "enrolled." It was usual for the Roman government to order

a census, as it was called, to be made of the people, at one time, even as often as once in five years, though not so frequently afterwards. This business was assigned to the censors, and it consisted in obtaining, and writing down, as exact an account as possible of the names, age, trade, rank, number, and property of the people. This census was extended by Augustus to those provinces and kingdoms which were subjected and tributary to the Roman power, and thrice taken under his reign.

With regard, again, to the extent of this enrolling, the opinion of some critics that it extended only to all the land of Judea, appears to be founded on an unusual and unauthorized limitation of the original word.* It is well known, that the Roman empire was called the empire of the world,† and Rome the mistress of the world. There was something of hyperbole, or exaggeration, no doubt, in this: but there was also this truth in it, that the greater part of the then known world was actually subject to the Romans. It may be noticed, too, that a singular mode of expression is used in reference to the three great empires which preceded the Roman. Thus, in Isa. xiv. 26, it is said of the judgments foretold against the Babylonians and Assyrians: "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations." It is probable, then, that this was a decree for a census being made of the whole Roman empire, including all its dependencies: and this appears to have been the second of the three taken during the reign of Augustus.

It is said, in the 2d verse: "*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*" This Cyrenius is the same person who, in the Latin language, was called Quirinius; his full name was Publius Sulpitius Quirinius. Considerable difficulties hang over this passage, in consequence of its being manifest, from Josephus and other authors, that Cyrenius was not president of Syria till a considerably later period than that which chronologists fix for the birth of Christ. It would, I fear, involve the whole subject in confusion, were we to attempt to state fully the various hypotheses which commentators hold on it. We shall, therefore, rest satisfied with stating the opinion of the learned author of the *Old and New Testament History Connected*.‡ He thinks, as many do, that the 1st verse of this chapter speaks only of the enrolling, or the taking up of the census, and that the 2d verse refers to the actual levying of a tax in consequence of the previous census; which tax was not raised till about twelve years after, and which occasioned great dissatisfaction and insurrections among the Jews. He thinks, too, that this is the decree for the census which was issued by Augustus, according to other historians, three years before the

* *ἀριθμῶσις*.

† "Romanum orbis terrarum imperium." Polybius calls the Roman Empire *παντὸς κόσμου ἀρχή*.

‡ Prideaux. See, however, Lardner's *Credibility*, part i.

birth of Christ; and that it need not be reckoned surprising that so long time should have elapsed before it reached the distant province of Syria, and was carried through that very extensive country. Saturninus was the person to whom this census was intrusted. Joab, he remarks, was nine months and twenty days in taking an account of the men who were fit for war in ten of the tribes of Israel. And when William the Conqueror ordered the survey to be made of England which is contained in what is called "Doom's-day Book," it took six years to complete it. Now, the Roman province of Syria was twice as extensive as all England. Saturninus, then, the Roman officer, who had been engaged for some time in executing the decree for taking up a census of all Syria (on which, as we are told in a parenthesis, a tax was afterwards levied under the presidency of Cyrenius), this Saturninus came at last to execute the decree at Bethlehem.

Now, the exact division of the Jewish nation into tribes and families, presented too obvious and too easy a plan to be overlooked, or rejected, in taking up this census. Nor, seeing they were now very much dispersed throughout the country, was there any way so efficient as that of assembling them, according to these divisions, in some of the chief towns which once belonged to them exclusively, and which, no doubt, still belonged to them in part. Accordingly, "*all went up to be taxed,*" or enrolled, "*every one into his own city;*" that is, to the place in which, or near to which, the inheritance lay which had fallen to his family by lot, and where, if the divine law had been fully adhered to, he would still have had his actual portion.

"*And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed,*" or enrolled, "*with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*" It was mentioned in the account given from the 26th verse of the 1st chapter, that Joseph and Mary dwelt in a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. In that passage, too, as well as in the song of Zacharias, we were led to consider how, according to ancient prophecy and New Testament genealogy, they were of the tribe of Judah and family of David. Indeed, both Joseph and Mary were lineally descended from David. It seemed proper, therefore, that, with a view of enrolment, they should go up to a city in the boundaries of the tribe of Judah, and to that particular city with which the family of David had the greatest connection. That city was Bethlehem.* It was called the city of David, because, as appears from David's history, he was born and spent his early life there. Thus have other cities been celebrated as the native places of other great men. Highly honoured, however, as was Bethlehem in being the native city of David, a far higher honour yet awaited it. Probably the state Mary was in would have been sustained as an excuse for her

* 1 Sam. xvi. 1, xvii. 12.

absence; it was, however, divinely and yet very naturally ordered, that she went up with her husband, though the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was very considerable.

It appears likely that, after their arrival at Bethlehem, some time had elapsed before their turn came to be enrolled: "*And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that Mary should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son.*"

There is nothing in the epithet, "first-born," which determines whether Mary had any offspring afterwards or not; for, in either case, Jesus, according to the ordinary use of language, was still her "first-born." Some think, however, that more is intended by this form of expression than that Jesus was *Mary's* first-born; as it might be literally rendered, "She brought forth her son, the first-born." In this way, "the first-born" becomes a distinguishing name of Jesus, denoting that he was the Messiah, who is elsewhere styled, "the first-begotten," the "first-born among many brethren," and "the first-born," or heir "of every creature."

Having brought forth her son, "*she wrapped him,*" as was usual, "*in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*" We may well suppose that the influx of strangers on this occasion into Bethlehem would soon crowd the inn, so that there was perhaps no longer any additional accommodation, even though the applicants had been rich, and would have been very profitable guests; at all events, there was no room for such humble strangers as Joseph and Mary. They were, therefore, necessitated to lodge in a stable. And though the lodging of beasts and human beings under the same roof may not, in ages of simplicity, and among people strangers to refinement, have been altogether without precedent, yet the strait to which this lowly but excellent pair were reduced, for whom such honour was in store, is truly remarkable. The interest of this, however, is still amazingly enhanced by the circumstances of Mary passing through, in such a situation, the hour of nature's trial; and after bearing and swaddling her son—the Son of God, and the Saviour of men—laying him down to sleep in a manger, or upper part of a stall!

Such is the account which Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, gives of this extraordinary, this most blessed event—an account simple, unpretending, unadorned, and unaccompanied by a single comment. Let us, however, before leaving it, contemplate it somewhat more narrowly, and endeavour to enter more deeply into the spirit of the truths which it naturally suggests.

In the first place, *The time of the Saviour's coming into the world is worthy of particular consideration, both as evidencing the truth of Christianity, in the fulfilment of prophecy, and also as wisely chosen in itself.* Jesus was born in the days of Herod the Great, who ruled in Judea under Augustus Cæsar, and about the four thousandth year of the world. This period is called by the Apostle

Paul "the fulness of time." It was so because it was the time fixed in Old Testament prophecy. "The sceptre," said Jacob, "shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver descended from him, until Shiloh come;" evidently predicting that Messiah (for so the Jews always understood Shiloh to mean,) was to appear before the total dissolution of the Jewish nation. And so it came to pass; for the power was already in some measure gone when Christ came; and when he had established his religion, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation scattered through the world. This, therefore, is quite decisive against unbelievers, especially against the unbelieving Jews. Again, Haggai foretold, that when "the Desire of all nations was come," God was "to fill his house with glory, and the glory of the latter house was to be greater than the glory of the former;" and Malachi said, that after another messenger had prepared the way, "the Lord whom his people sought, even the messenger of the covenant in whom they delighted, should suddenly come to his temple." Both these prophets clearly foretold that Messiah was to come while the second temple was standing. This he accordingly did; and he appeared repeatedly in the temple. But that temple being demolished, if these prophecies are not already fulfilled, they never can be fulfilled. The prophet Daniel is still more minute, fixing the very year in which Messiah was to come: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." And the Most Holy is called the "Messiah, the Prince." According to the prophetic language of a day for a year, and a week for seven years, seventy weeks, or seven times seventy, amount to four hundred and ninety years. Now, without entering into the niceties of the computations of different chronologers, exactly that period elapsed from the commandment to rebuild the city after the Babylonish captivity, to the appearance of Christ in the world. Thus was it determined and foretold by him who saith: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." And thus, in this, as in many other points, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

But it has been asked, Why was the coming of the Saviour (which is represented as so great a blessing) so long delayed—why were four thousand years suffered to elapse before he appeared? It were a sufficient reply to this, could we only say that God was not our debtor, to be obliged to send his Son at any time into our poor and rebellious world, and that it became men to be grateful whenever he should appear. But we can say much more than this. It is to be recollected that the benefits of redemption extended backwards to Old Testament be-

lievers, who were justified by faith in a work which was then future, as believers at the present day are justified by faith in a work which is now past. Besides, it seems highly probable that men could not have comprehended the gospel, had it been revealed to them at once in all its simplicity and glory, and could not have received Messiah properly, had there not been many means employed to prepare them for his coming. It must be obvious how the types and ceremonies of the law tended to bring down the atonement, and other sublime truths of the gospel, to human comprehension; and how the Old Testament, as a whole, is admirably calculated—indeed, quite necessary—to enable us fully to establish the truth, to unfold the nature, and to appreciate the value of the whole evangelical system.

And while time enough was thus given to originate and to show the working of the old dispensation, time enough was given to show that it was very imperfect. “Therefore, what the law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh, that God sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to accomplish.”

By this delay, too, time was given to see what human reason could do; and it was clearly shown that it could not accomplish any thing satisfactory in the way of regenerating the human race. When it was plain that the wisdom of the wise was foolishness, and that the world by philosophy knew not God, then it pleased the Lord to cause light to shine on men from heaven, and by the simplicity of preaching to save them that believe.

Nay, the circumstances of the world at the time Christ came were exceedingly favourable for the promotion of the purpose of his appearance. He came not only to purchase salvation by his death, but to establish personally, and by his apostles, a religion which was to diffuse itself over the world. Now, by that time a version of the Old Testament had existed for ages in the Greek—the most generally prevalent language of the world—a circumstance of much importance as a preparation and as an accompaniment. But to come more exactly to the period of his appearance and residence on earth:—The Roman empire was then extended over the greater part of the world, which rendered intercourse with distant parts safe and easy. Devout men out of every nation under heaven, as it is expressed, used to come to Jerusalem to worship. It was, therefore, a fit time for many to run to and fro, that knowledge might be increased. Now, too, the temple of Janus was shut in Rome. It was the custom of the Romans to keep the gates of this heathen temple open in time of war, and shut when they were at peace with all nations. This temple was shut only four times before since the building of the city. In the year in which Christ was born it was shut for the fifth time, and it continued shut for twelve years—a fit situation of affairs for ushering into the world him who is styled the “Prince of Peace.” Nor must it be forgotten, that about this time there was a very general expectation of the appearance of Messiah among the Jews; and even, though more

confused, of some great personage among the Gentiles. Many Jews were waiting for the consolation, by looking for redemption in Israel. As he was the Desire of all nations, so he was particularly their desire at this period. The wise men of the East were thus prepared to expect him. Those who are acquainted with the Latin classics, will not easily forget the pleasure with which they first read in the heathen writers, Suetonius and Tacitus, an account of an expectation which these writers wished to apply to Vespasian, but which evidently pointed to Jesus. "There had prevailed," says Suetonius, "throughout all the East, an ancient and constant opinion, that it was in the fates, that at that time persons should proceed from Judea, who should obtain the government of the world." "The generality were persuaded," says Tacitus, "that it was contained in the ancient writings of the priests, that at that very time the East should prevail; and that some who should come out of Judea should obtain the empire of the world." To the same purpose, too, are the words of the Jewish historian Josephus, who says, that "what chiefly encouraged the Jews to insurrection was an ambiguous oracle, found likewise in the Sacred Writings, that about that time some one from their country should obtain the empire of the world." On the whole, it is quite certain, that in the age in which Christ actually appeared the expectation of a great deliverer was peculiarly strong—a circumstance serving at once to prove that the time was come, and to prepare many for the event.

Let us admire, then, the wisdom of God in the choice of the time, and in the fulfilment of the whole. Let us hold it established that Christ is indeed come, and that it is in vain to look for another. And holding the truth of his divine mission, let us ever remember, that if we would be benefited by it, we must receive him in the characters in which he is offered, relying solely on his merits, and submitting heartily to his laws.

With regard, secondly, to *the city in which Christ was born*, the fulfilment of the prophecy, and the divine arrangement by which that fulfilment took place, are very noticeable. Micah had expressly foretold that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, and so, indeed, the Jews were universally persuaded. "When Herod (as we read in Matt. ii. 4) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes together, he demanded of them, where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel." As Jesus' parents lived, and as he himself was brought up in Nazareth, the Jews supposed that he was born there, and looked on this as an insurmountable objection to his claim of being Messiah. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Many of the people said, Of a truth this is the prophet; others said, This is the Christ; but some said, Shall

Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him.* We know, however, that there was no ground of objection here; for he was born in Bethlehem. And the way in which this was brought about was truly wonderful. Some may see in such an event nothing but the effect of an emperor's decree; but the considerate mark in it the finger of Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. Augustus, in issuing this decree, was probably desirous merely of gratifying his pride and his avarice; but He who sits on the throne of the universe was thus working out his purpose of mercy to perishing men. Joseph and Mary were thus led up to Bethlehem, doubtless providentially, and yet, as we may say, very naturally. There was a divine contrivance in this, but there was no human sinister design. It cannot be said that Joseph and Mary, having formed the deep design of palming their child on the world as Messiah, were careful to go up to Bethlehem that he might be born there, as prophecy required; for, on the contrary, they were, to their obvious inconvenience, laid under the necessity of going up, by a public order, with all of David's descendants, and that, too, at that particular time. Nor was it by accident; for it was by providential arrangement that the decree was put in execution at Bethlehem exactly at that period. Had it been executed even probably a single week earlier, or a single week later, the prophecy, for any thing that we can say, would have been defeated. But every thing in relation both to place and time, happened according to the very letter of prophecy.

This enrolment at Bethlehem, however, had the effect of *establishing beyond dispute the genealogy of Christ*. This was a point of the first importance in the evidence of Christianity. It was so ordered, therefore, that the names of Joseph and Mary, at least, if not of Jesus also, were enrolled in the census now made, as belonging to the house of David. Thus it was not in the power of the Jews to conceal or to deny the fact: and thus the early Christian apologists, in disputing with unbelievers, were enabled to appeal to the authentic records of the Roman empire.

But, in the last place, *how astonishing, how gracious, and how instructive, the condescension of the Son of God, in being born, and that, too, in so abject circumstances!* Who is this of whom we are speaking? Who is this of whom we learn such strange things? This is the Word of God, who in the beginning was with God, and who was God, by whom, and for whom, all things were made; and this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He who created whatever exists without life, from the huge planet that rolls in the widest fields of space, to the veriest atom that dances in the sunbeam; and whatever exists with life, from the noble seraph, who adores before the celestial throne, to the

* John vii. 40.

smallest insect that creeps in the dust: he by whom all things are upheld, and on whose shoulder rests the government of nature, of providence, and of grace: he who sits on the throne of heaven, while its hosts adore him as worthy to receive blessing, and glory, and honour, and power: he descended from that lofty eminence to this low earth: he stooped to assume the form of a creature of his own hand: he became man, and was born of a woman! If such an one was to have been born at all, we should have supposed that it would have been in the noblest and wealthiest station of life; that his parents would have been royal; that his birth-place would have been a palace; that the room where he first drew the breath of life would have been a spacious, splendid, carpeted, gilded, and canopied apartment; that the first ladies of the land would have been contending for the honour and the pleasure of waiting on the heavenly babe; that his clothing would have been the very finest which could be furnished; and that his cradle would have been a masterpiece of ingenious, and beautiful, and costly workmanship. But no. "Is not this the carpenter's son," said they, "and is not his mother called Mary? and his other connections, are they not all mean persons in the midst of us?" He was a root out of a dry ground; and when he came there was no earthly splendour to attract the carnal eye, but, on the contrary, much poverty to repel it. Instead of being lodged in a palace, Joseph and Mary could not obtain admittance into an inn; undervalued and repulsed, they bent their weary steps to the stable; and there Mary having brought forth that Son, on whose head the increasing blessings of ransomed millions of the human race are now multiplying, and will throughout eternity be multiplied, wrapped him in such plain clothes as she could furnish, and then cradled him in a manger! Was there ever any thing at all comparable to this? Let not familiarity with this history lessen its importance in our view. How astonishing the whole! The eternal Word became a helpless babe. He who "made the cloud a garment, and thick darkness a swaddling band for the sea," was himself wrapped in swaddling-bands. Nay, "he whose are the cattle on a thousand hills," and all the flocks that graze the green earth: he whose dwelling-place is the fairest mansion of heaven's brightness and blessedness—he, when he was coming into the world, was refused admittance into the dwelling-place of human beings, was treated as if he had been on a level with the beasts of the stall—in a word (for what can be said or conceived half so affecting?) was born in a stable and laid in a manger! Never let the wonders of this event lessen in our view. Never, when we think of it, let us cease to admire and adore.

Nor is it merely the fact of such an astonishing humiliation which should now strike us: how wonderful, also, the *gracious purpose* for which it was undergone! It was for us, fallen, corrupted, and helpless mortals. It was for us who had violated

his laws, and were obstinately persisting in our rebellion. It was for us, before whose existence he was infinitely glorious and happy from eternity, and whom, though we had been annihilated, he would never have missed, and could have soon replaced with beings more exalted and perfectly dutiful—for us whom, while we were arrayed in the attitude of malevolent and puny opposition, he could with infinite ease have borne down, and scattered, and made the lasting monuments of his righteous indignation; it was for us, that, passing by the angels who fell, he took our nature upon him, was born in a stable, and laid in a manger. It was that, by his obedience and death, he might not confer on us a slight, or short-lived favour, but rescue us from an unfathomable depth of guilt and wretchedness, and bless us with every blessing, spiritual and eternal. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” Aware, then, of this, let us be filled with gratitude, and let us, by faith and dutiful obedience, carefully fall in with the gracious purpose which brought him into our world.

How instructive, too, is our Lord's lowly birth, as to *the estimation in which we should hold the show and tinsel of the world's greatness*. The Son of God might have chosen to appear in worldly splendour, but he rejected it. This pours contempt on earthly glory. It exposes the vanity and the worthlessness of mere external grandeur, raises the respectability of lowly worth, and exalts the value of humble excellence. While this should teach much thankfulness to those who are more highly favoured in respect of domestic comforts, it should reconcile the poorest to their lot, and make them contented with whatever shelter and whatever accommodation Providence may enable them to obtain. And let it be said, to the praise of divine grace, and to the honour of humble poverty, that there are many wearing out their days and nights both in the little country hut, and in the poor city garret, whose every murmur is silenced, and whose cheerful thanksgivings are drawn forth, as often as they bethink themselves of the holy family in Bethlehem's stable, and of the subsequent hardships of “Him who had not where to lay his head.”

To this we shall only add, that the lowly birth of Jesus, which is merely a specimen of the condescension which he constantly exhibited, should *teach us to be humble and condescending*. We should study, in the frame of our minds and in the actions of our lives, to imitate the pattern which is here set before us. “Look not every man,” says Paul, “on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” “Learn of me,” says our Lord

himself, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Professing to be the followers of him who was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, who washed the disciples' feet, and underwent every humiliation, and all this for the benefit of sinful men, let us remember how unbecoming in us would be pride of any kind; and, in particular, let us guard against superciliousness and indifference to others; let us be ready to condescend to men of low estate; and let us think nothing below us, by which we can benefit even the poorest and the most ungodly of our fellow creatures, either by promoting their temporal welfare, or by bringing home to their understandings and their hearts the knowledge and the comforts of that great salvation, for the accomplishment of which the Lord of glory condescended to be born and to die.

LECTURE VIII.

LUKE II. 8-20.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. 13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. 15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. 16. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

THERE meet in the person and history of the Lord Jesus Christ, apparently the most contradictory, and certainly the most wonderful, and, were it not for the doctrine of his two natures, the most unintelligible, variety of opposite qualities and events. Here are to be seen the blackest shades of gloom, and the most brilliant streaks of glory; and here are to be heard the cry of desertion and the shout of victory. There meet in him the noblest majesty, with the lowliest condescension; unsearchable riches, with abject poverty; happiness surpassing all created bliss, with sufferings more intense than ever were endured; honour divine, with shame and spitting; and the ardent love, the heartfelt blessings, and the lowly worship of believers on earth, and saints and angels in heaven, with the neglect of the world, the hatred of enemies, and the "Away with him" of the multitude. In no part of his eventful history does this remark find a more complete illustration than in that of his birth. We have already considered the wonderful condescension he manifested in coming into our world at all, and in taking our nature upon him in any way; we have marked, too, the lowliness of his parentage; and we have been affected and almost confounded by the singular circumstances of humiliation in which he was actually born. Was there ever anything at all comparable to this, we again say? The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, the Lord of men and of angels born in a stable, and laid in a manger! But here, too, as usual,

we meet with several counterbalancing occurrences; and for the relation of one of these, of which we have just been reading, we are, under God, indebted solely to Luke. It would seem as if the Father's love did not admit of his so far ceasing to testify his regard for his Son, as to leave him altogether without some token of favour at his birth, and as if he had resolved that if from its lowly circumstances any scandal should unjustly arise, there should be something by which all pretence for that scandal should be entirely done away. Accordingly, what a contrast was there between the scene in Bethlehem's stable, and that which was at the same moment passing in Bethlehem's fields!

"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields." The country in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem appears to have been well fitted for sheep. When Jesse had made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, the prophet asked: "Are all thy children here?" to which Jesse replied: "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep." We read too, that "David went, and returned from Saul, to feed his father's sheep in Bethlehem;" and that one morning "he rose up early, and left the sheep with a keeper," and went to the camp with provision for his brethren, as his father had commanded him. Luke here tells us, that there were "in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields." * They sometimes had, during the finer season of the year, tents, or little cottages, erected at a distance from their dwellings, that they might the more effectually tend their flocks. They were "*keeping watch over their flock by night*;" literally, they were keeping the watches of the night over their flocks. The night, once divided into three, was at this period of history, divided into four watches; all of which are mentioned in Scripture. It was a frequent practice in guarding, for one set of men to continue for three hours, and for another set to succeed them for the same period, much as soldiers still change guard, and seamen change the watch. Dr Doddridge here remarks: "As it is not probable that they exposed their flocks to the coldness of winter nights in that climate, where, as a certain traveller† has shown, they were so very unwholesome, it may be strongly argued from this circumstance, that those who have fixed upon December for the birth of Christ, have been mistaken in the time of it." The shepherds kept watch, not so much to prevent their flocks from straying, as to guard them from wolves and other beasts of prey. In such a country and climate as Judea, the pastoral must have been a very pleasant life, and we know that it was held in much respect. It is often

* ἀγρουλουντες "Qui his gregibus pastores præsunt, noctem et diem degunt in campis, uxoresque et liberos circumvectant in curribus, quibus pro domiciliis utuntur: nisi quod aliquando exigua tabernacula tendant. Longe vero lateque vagantur, modo campos, modo editiora loca, modo valles, ut ratio temporis et pabuli postulet, persequentes." Busbequius, Epist. I. describing Turkey, &c.—φυλασσοντες φυλακας is an elegant and emphatic form of expression used by Xenophon, De Exped. Cyri Lib. II. and Lib. V. See Raphaelins' Observations.

† Dr. Shaw.

alluded to in Scripture, literally and figuratively. Several of the most gracious divine manifestations, and most interesting discoveries concerning the Messiah, were made under the Old Testament, to men who followed this occupation; as, for example, to Abraham, Moses, and David. In like manner, a singular honour was now preparing for the shepherds of Bethlehem, who, from the reception they gave the heavenly message, and the part they afterwards acted, appear to have been believing and holy men, whom divine grace had taught and prepared to welcome a coming Saviour.

Perhaps we should not err from the fact, were we to say these shepherds were now out in the fields in the immediate neighbourhood of Bethlehem; for we are not to conceive of these or most other countries, as of our own safe and peaceful country, in which villas and cottages thickly stud the neighbourhood of our unwall'd cities, to the extent of miles; on the contrary, almost immediately after they were without the walls of such a city as Bethlehem must be supposed to have been, they were in the open country. Not far from this favoured city the shepherds were stationed, quietly tending their fleecy care. By day, in one direction, the walls of Bethlehem were to be seen distinctly, and in another, the tops of the mountains were dimly to be discerned in the distance. But now there was no such view to divert the mind from itself. The lamp of day had long sunk beneath the western horizon, and given place to the murky empire of night; busy man was no longer in motion, and the beasts of the stall were at rest; the stars were glittering in the dark blue firmament; the flocks were prostrate on the dewy lea; not a sheep was heard to bleat, nor a breath of wind to blow, nor any sound whatever to make its way through the midnight air; and the wakeful shepherds themselves, in due accordance with the solemn scene, were stationary, and thoughtful, and silent:—when, “*lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.*”

It seemed befitting that an event of infinite importance should be announced with suitable solemnity; and for such a message, one of the noblest of the angels was not too noble a messenger. The particular angel was probably the angel Gabriel, who had already been repeatedly commissioned on errands intimately connected with the event which he now descended from heaven to publish. The angel unexpectedly and suddenly “came upon them,” or as the word * might have been rendered, “stood over them:” that is descended from on high, he appeared in a visible form, and rested in the air over their heads.

And still further to augment the splendour of the vision, as well as fully to convince them that it was indeed from heaven, “the glory of the Lord shone round about them.” This glory seems to have been that exceedingly bright and dazzling light, which was the usual symbol of the divine presence. Such a

glory was seen by the Israelites in the wilderness, and filled the tabernacle ; and such a splendour was seen by the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, when Christ's "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light," and "a bright cloud overshadowed them:" and such a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shone round about Saul at mid-day on his way to Damascus. Striking as this glorious light always was, even when it shone at mid-day, it must have been doubly striking when it suddenly broke in upon the gloom of night. Methinks the flocks began to move, mistaking this miraculous light for the opening day ; and the lark soared on high, piping her cheerful song to this unusual morn. As for the shepherds, they were altogether amazed at the appearance, and "*were sore afraid.*" This was generally the case, in similar angelic visits, with mortals, who, conscious of sin, are naturally apprehensive that heavenly messengers may be commissioned in wrath, and who, even though they be on the whole faithful and holy, are, in their present weak and imperfect state, unable to bear the direct vision, and the exceeding weight of glory.

On this, the angel—kindly careful to allay their needless alarm, as was said to Gideon, Daniel, Zacharias, the Virgin Mary, and the women at the sepulchre—the angel, in the most soothing and condescending manner, said to the shepherds, "*Fear not.*" He not only assured them that they had nothing to fear from his visit, but proceeded to inform them of the great reason they had to rejoice. "*Behold,*" said he, "*I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David,*" or Bethlehem, "*a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.*" Having already considered the time, place, and other circumstances of Christ's birth, we need not now repeat them. The angel expressly declared, that the child born was that mighty Saviour, whom the faithful expected under the well-known name of the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed ; and who was not only Christ, but "the Lord,"—the mighty God, the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth, to whom every knee was to bow, and every tongue confess, and who was especially to be head over all things to his Church. Glad tidings these, good news—a gospel indeed ! "I bring them," said the angel, "to you," to you shepherds they are thus announced, and to you individually they are welcome tidings ;—but not to you only do I bring them, for they shall be "to all people"—to the whole Jewish people shall they be published, and the blessings they unfold be proposed, in the first instance ; and eventually to all the nations on the earth.

In order to confirm their faith, and to be a mark to them how to find and distinguish the heaven-born child, the angel said : "*Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.*" This implied, that there could be no danger of their being led into a mistake by finding any other babe in such lowly circumstances, and that whenever they should find one in that

condition, they might, without hesitation, conclude that that was he.

A single angel was sufficient, and indeed much better than a number, to announce that event; but it required more to make a chorus to celebrate it. The astonished shepherds had yet something more astonishing to see and to hear. By this time, however, their courage was reassured, and their minds were more composed, and they were prepared to witness the finest sight, and to listen to the finest sound, which had ever been seen or heard on earth—the dazzling appearance, and the noble hymn of a multitude of the celestial army, who on a sudden came to join the angel, and to praise the Lord. Scarcely had the angel closed his message,

“When swift to every startled eye
New streams of glory light the sky;
Heaven bursts her azure gates to pour
Her spirits to the midnight hour.

On wheels of light, on wings of flame,
The glorious hosts of Zion came;
High heaven with songs of triumph rung,
While thus they struck their harps and sung:”—

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!”

These words are to be considered as a doxology. They are not properly a prayer, that God may be glorified, and that men may find peace and grace, but they praise God for what he has done already, and they do it in the most natural and expressive way of short, energetic, and abrupt exclamations. “Glory to God in the highest!” The angels ascribe glory to God, for what he has done for men through his Son, in whose birth they look on the work as already virtually accomplished. Glory accrues to God from all his works. He appears glorious in his works of creation and providence. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.” It is to the great work of redemption, however, that the angels chiefly refer; and it is in this, unquestionably, that the glory of God is most clearly manifested. Here is strikingly shown forth the glory of his sovereignty, in the choice of his people; the glory of his wisdom, in contriving so admirable a plan; the glory of his power, in executing it; the glory of his grace, not only in resolving to save sinners, but in giving up his only Son for them; the glory of his justice, in the perfect satisfaction made to the honour of his violated law; the glory of his holiness, in the provision made for the sanctification of his people; and the glory of his truth and faithfulness, in the exact fulfilment of all his promises. “I have glorified thee on earth,” said Jesus, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” On this

ground, the angels ascribe glory to God, and that, too, "in the highest." This may signify, in the highest degree, and in the most exalted strains, or, in the highest, even heavenly places, and by the most exalted beings.

"*And on earth peace.*" Though God was thus glorified in himself, it was an addition to that glory, that it was advanced in connection with the good of man. By the reception of the gospel, men have peace with God: from being enemies they become reconciled; being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel brings men peace of conscience, too, for allaying remorse and fear, and imparting inward quiet and satisfaction. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." The gospel is also the great means of making and keeping men at peace with one another. Its spirit is a spirit of forbearance, and meekness, and gentleness; it teaches that, if possible, we should live peaceably with all men; and in so far as it is properly understood and acted on, it tends to prevent and to stop the evils of war, and to encourage the cultivation of a good understanding among nations, and of universal benevolence. It is the grand bond of union among all men, both Jews and Gentiles. "Christ is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us—to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace; and came and preached peace, to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh." Peace here, too, may be put for every blessing, as when we say: Peace be with you. The angels sung, "Peace on earth," knowing that it had already been partially felt, and that a way was opened for its universal dissemination.

They sung also, "Good will towards men." This was not perhaps essentially different from the preceding acclamation of "Peace on earth." Of that peace, this good will was the source. God's free grace is the fountain whence peace and every blessing flow to sinful men. And this good will, this favour, this benevolence of God in the gospel, is truly wonderful, and worthy of all praise. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!"

What vastly increases the ground of admiration and praise here, is the natural and beautiful consistence of the whole scheme of redemption. Here nothing is overlooked. Here no one desirable object is sacrificed for the sake of gaining another. Here the salvation of the sinner is secured without any infringement of the divine law. Here all the attributes of Deity stand prominently forward, mutually illustrating each other's glory. Here "mercy and truth are met together; and righteousness and peace have embraced each other."

Thus did one angel announce, and thus did the great angelic host celebrate, the birth of the Son of God and the Saviour of man. Longer, however, than was necessary, no angel was ever known to remain below. Having, therefore, faithfully and joy-

fully executed the office on which they were sent, these angels sought their native skies; and with them vanished the light of celestial glory, leaving the fields and the shepherds of Bethlehem to darkness.

"*When the angels were gone away from them into heaven,*" the shepherds, after a brief consultation, resolved to go to Bethlehem, as the sign given them by the angel implied that they ought to do, and as they were of themselves bent on doing. They did not hesitate; nor did they delay; nor did they entertain any doubt of finding the word spoken by the angel to be steadfast. They did not say: "Let us go and see whether it be so;" but they said: "*Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.*" Accordingly, they proceeded "*with haste,*" and no doubt with a holy anxiety, to Bethlehem; where, making inquiry, according to the directions given them, they soon "*found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger:*" in short, they found every thing exactly as the angel had described. As we visited, so to speak, the same lowly abode on a former occasion, we need not stop again to describe it particularly.

When the shepherds saw this scene, they contemplated it, without doubt, with holy wonder; and looking through the mean exterior into what was spiritual and divine, and convinced that they indeed beheld the Lord's Christ, they would offer him their believing and profound homage. It is very probable that they would first of all describe their angelic vision to Joseph and Mary, who, in their turn, would acquaint them with the extraordinary events which had previously occurred, and that thus the minds of all of them would be further enlightened, and their faith confirmed. In addition to this, the shepherds "*made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*" As his birth was good tidings to all people, the shepherds rightly judged that it was proper to publish these tidings as extensively as possible.

The general effect produced on the people who heard these things which were told them by the shepherds, was *wonder*. A wonder, it is to be feared, as to most of them, only of vacant and fruitless astonishment, which soon gave place to forgetfulness and apathy. Thus the crowd often marvelled afterwards at Christ's miracles, but continued to reject his gospel, and to live in impenitence and unbelief. And thus, it is to be feared, do many still feel entertained, and surprised, and even pleased, with the narration of these occurrences, in Bethlehem's stable and fields; but this is all that can be said. This history affects them like any interesting piece of common history, or like a well-conceived fiction: they are moved by its tender incidents, and they are astonished by its sublime; but the whole floats in inefficient images on their fancy, while the great lesson respecting the actual reception of that Saviour to whom it relates, remains unnoticed, or evaded or contemned. It is not thus, we

may rest assured, that this history can prove profitable to us. Let us mark the conduct of our Lord's mother, who was of a very different spirit.

"*But Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.*" She appears to have been a woman of much prudence, and thoughtfulness, and reflection. It is said of her also in the 51st verse, "that she kept all these sayings in her heart." She treasured them up in her memory. She weighed them well from time to time in her mind. She compared them one with another. She marked the illustrations and the fulfilment of the whole. Thus was there a solid foundation laid for those enlightened views, that firm faith, and that holy obedience, in consequence of which she was more blessed in Christ as her Saviour and Lord, than as her Son. So also must we, if we would reap saving benefit, hide God's law in our hearts, retain wisdom's words, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and study to live habitually in the recollection, faith, and obedience of the truth.

The shepherds, having made this satisfactory and delightful visit to Bethlehem, returned to their pastoral employment, rejoicing in the grand display of mercy to mankind, and in the distinguishing kindness shown to themselves:—"they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary. Thus it is manifest that these shepherds were enlightened and joyful believers, being among the very first fruits of the gospel dispensation.

Let us yet, before coming to a close, again advert to a few of the most prominent topics in this inimitably beautiful piece of evangelical history.

First, *Let us mark, and let us try ourselves by the description here given of the birth, and consequent work of Christ, as good tidings of great joy.* These tidings and the blessings they imply, are as effectually proclaimed and offered to us as they were to the shepherds, or to those who heard them preached by inspired men. And can it be made a question, whether these are good news in themselves? To be told that one has been born, who has purchased for sinners deliverance from condemnation and from endless misery, together with the favour of God here, and everlasting happiness hereafter!—what news so blessed ever reached the ear of man? And as these news are good in themselves, so they ought to be good to us, and give joy to us. Let us inquire, then, if it indeed be so. Alas! there are some who, instead of welcoming these news, do not like to hear them; they keep out of the reach of this sound, or shut their ears against it. And there are others who can bear, indeed, to hear these news, but who take no interest in them. It must be quite obvious that both these classes are in a state of unbelief and condemnation. May God in his mercy bring them to a better disposition of mind!

There are others, of various shades of character and of feelings, who set a high value on the gospel in general, who look upon it as an unspeakable blessing to others, and who anxiously desire to have personal enjoyment from it; but who cannot hear it as glad tidings to *them*, who cannot take joy from it themselves. There are various causes of this, some of which are by no means altogether inconsistent with true piety, though most of them partake of sinful infirmity. In some, this state of mind is occasioned by bodily weakness, and in others by general constitutional melancholy. In the majority of these cases, however, there is partial error lurking at the bottom. They need to be shown, and to study the way of God, more perfectly. They should dwell not only on their own sinfulness, but also on the absolute freedom and truth of the promises connected with the atonement. Or, if the gospel (which, it should always be recollected, signifies "good news") be fully understood by such persons, it is not credited at the time, or at least, it is received only with hesitation and doubt. No news whatever can have much effect on the mind, if they are not thoroughly believed; neither can the gospel tidings, unless they are actually and decidedly credited. If these tidings be both properly comprehended and really believed, it is difficult to conceive how they should not be glad tidings. Let all such persons give their mind, then, without prejudice and with steady pursuit, to their consideration; and may the Lord deliver them from every mistake, and from all unbelief, and open their ears to hear, and their eyes to see, what great things he hath done for them! Meanwhile, let those who have the comfort of these news, evidence their sanctifying influence by a holy and virtuous life. And let all who can inwardly rejoice at the coming of this mighty Deliverer, outwardly express that joy in the language of grateful praise. "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel"—"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord"—"Hosannah to the Son of David. Hosannah in the highest!"

Secondly, there is much matter of *example and encouragement*, in what we have here read concerning the shepherds. They present an edifying example of diligent attention to their worldly calling, teaching that none ought to eat the bread of idleness, but that every man ought to do his own work. It was, too, when they were occupied in this humble way, that they were honoured and blessed with this celestial vision and most important information. So also it was when Moses was keeping Jethro's flock, that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and it was when the disciples were plying their toil of fishing, that Jesus came and stood on the shore. Thus every real disciple, when he is engaged in his occupation, however humble, provided it be a

lawful one, may expect, not indeed a miraculous vision, but enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting communications from on high.

The shepherds' exemplary conduct throughout is also deserving of our imitation. They listened and gave credit to the angelic message; and so should we. They were obedient to the implied command; and so ought we. They proceeded, without delay, to seek every information; and so ought we. Being favoured with a discovery, they communed together, and consulted those who knew additional particulars; and so ought we. Having themselves come to the knowledge and the comfort of the good news, they did all they could to extend them to others; and so surely ought we. We do not well, if, in a day of good tidings, we hold our peace. Let us tell them to those who are within our reach. Let us do all we can to diffuse the knowledge of the birth and the work of a saviour to the farthest corners of the earth, that so the gospel may become in fact, what it is calculated to be in its own nature, and destined to be in the divine purpose—"glad tidings of great joy to all people."

To the great majority of Christians, too, the shepherds were an example, in returning from their visit to Bethlehem to their former calling. It is only a few who are intended to be withdrawn, in a great measure at least, if not entirely, from worldly pursuits, like the apostles. After religious privileges and ordinances, believers must return to the business of life. The general rule is: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." The shepherds, however, returned "glorifying and praising God:"—a lesson to Christians not to leave their religious impressions behind them in the closet, or in the sanctuary, but to carry them with them to their work and into society, to walk habitually with God, to eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, and to go on their way rejoicing.

Lastly. *There is much to admire and imitate in the deep interest which the angels take in the glory of God as manifested in his Son, and in the salvation of sinners of mankind.* With cheerfulness and delight they undertook and accomplished the mission of which we have been reading, evidencing that love to us which should lead us to love them in return, and to desire their presence; and testifying that reverence and love to the Redeemer, which we are bound by every tie to imitate. Their conduct on this occasion was, indeed, only one illustration of the spirit by which they are constantly influenced. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels"—"Which things the angels desire to look into." These exalted beings were never careless spectators of the achievements of the Son of God, but earnestly pried into them, and rejoiced in every opportunity of testifying their regard to him, and of promoting his success and glory. From the date of their own creation they served him constantly and perfectly. When the eternal Word was employed

in creating this world, when he prepared the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, when there was yet no man to praise him, these sons of God were his attendants, and shouted for joy. Instead of lessening their attention on account of his humiliation, they increased it. One of their number notified to Mary the Lord's conception. And what happened when he actually came into the world? A multitude of the heavenly host accompanied him:—so delightful is it to be where thou art, O Redeemer! "When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." They ministered to him after his temptation; and in his agony in the garden, one of them strengthened him. We have no information as to how they felt or acted at his crucifixion; but we know that they bore a part in his resurrection. When he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, his retinue consisted of the chariots of God, even thousands of angels. His entry into heaven was welcomed by the shouts of all their myriads; and he is still the object of their praise. *We*, however, lie under greater obligations to him. Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He is the Lord of angels, but he is the Saviour of man.

Nor let us forget that the angels still cherish the same desire to promote the success of the gospel which influenced them on the plains of Bethlehem. They are still "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." Though not entitled to make any positive affirmation, we may say that, unless the present moment be an exception to what Scripture teaches us to regard as the general rule, some of them are now here, having descended from heaven and having entered this house, to see and hear what is passing, and especially to mark what reception you are giving to Him, whose birth in the city of David they announced of old to the shepherds. Serious consideration! What do they now discover passing in your minds? and with what tidings shall they re-ascend? Shall they report that you have heard of the coming of the Son of God with indifference? Or shall they cause joy in heaven on account of some of you whom they have seen repenting under the kindly influence of the good news? and shall they tell of the holy gratitude of confirmed Christians, who were meditating on that never-to-be-forgotten and blessed event? Ye angels who excel in strength! ye spirits who perform your Maker's will, swift as the wind, and resistless as a flame of fire! we address you not as mediators, for that would be a language which you would abhor; yet we acknowledge with gratitude the kind errand on which you are sent; we admire your faithful devotion to him who is your God and our Redeemer; and we are desirous of joining you in celebrating his praise. Raise your devotions, ye seraphs. Extol our incarnate Deliverer; exalt him very high. Let the sweetest notes of song join in concert with the striking of your loudest

strings, that the name of Immanuel may echo through every part of your land. Gladly would we catch your spirit, and gladly would we emulate your song. But as we are naturally far inferior to you, so, alas! we are still further incapacitated by our unworthiness and sin. Mortality, misery, and sin benumb our faculties, our praises freeze on our lips, and our very best efforts give birth only to such weak and feeble breathings as ye now are witnesses to. Nevertheless, we will thus praise him, rather than not at all.

LECTURE IX.

LUKE II. 21-33.

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 22. And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy unto the Lord;) 24. And to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. 25. And, behold, there was a man at Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him."

WHENEVER we see a Jew, we see one of the nobles of the earth. It is true that he always suggests to us the idea of inexcusable obstinacy, and of judicial degradation, and that he often appears in the form of a dejected trafficker, and homeless wanderer; but through that guise we can readily see the man of high mind, and of illustrious ancestry. Though he is unable to trace, with certainty, every step in his genealogy, we cannot doubt as to what it is in general. Who can refer to a race so ennobled, or to forefathers so pious? Who belongs to a nation so ancient, so wise, so renowned for wonders, so eminently distinguished by the special favour of the Almighty? While there are many circumstances in their history in which the Jews themselves justly glory, there is one circumstance in which they, as a body, can take no pleasure, and yet it is the most honourable to their race of all—the circumstance that from among them proceeded the Saviour of the world. Their honourable privileges are enumerated by the Apostle Paul in the following climax: "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

We have formerly seen how Christ came of their nation, and, as prophecy required, of the tribe of Judah, and of the particular family of David; and we have considered, it is to be hoped, not without some suitable impressions, his birth, both in the lowly circumstances in which it actually took place, and in the hea-

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We have formerly seen how Christ came of their nation, and, as prophecy required, of the tribe of Judah, and of the particular family of David; and we have considered, it is to be hoped, not without some suitable impressions, his birth, both in the lowly circumstances in which it actually took place, and in the hea-

venly glory with which it was announced. We now proceed to remark, that his being born a Jew, very materially affected the complexion of his subsequent history. In particular, in consequence of this he submitted, as we here read, to the initiatory ordinance of circumcision. It is true, that he was not an object for one of the most important blessings of which this institution was an emblem, for he had no sin to put away: yet there were several reasons which rendered it proper in his case. It was thus seen, that he was to be made in all things like his brethren, sin only excepted. He was thus declared to be a descendant of Abraham, to all of whose seed the covenant extended. He thus actually entered into that covenant. He thus set an example of obedience to the divine command. He was thus not only initiated into the Jewish Church, but engaged to all its duties, and entitled to all its privileges. He thus was qualified to be a minister of the circumcision, and became a debtor to do the whole law. Thus too, and thus alone, could he become a substitute and a Saviour for the Jews, who were born, not only under the moral law, like the Gentiles, but also under the ceremonial law, which they often violated. Hence the apostle says: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we," Jews as well as Gentiles, "might receive the adoption of sons." For reasons somewhat similar, Jesus insisted on being baptized by John, saying: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Jesus was circumcised "*when eight days*," as it is here expressed, "*were accomplished*"—not when eight full days were passed, but when the eighth day was come, counting inclusive of both extremes, as the law required. This explains the form of expression, "*after three days*," in regard to Christ's resurrection. We may here just remark in passing, what was noticed formerly, that this early administration of the Jewish ordinance is quite in favour of infant baptism, the spiritual blessings signified by both being the same, and there being no objection which can be brought against the latter, which might not have been, with equal justice, urged against the former.

According to the usual custom, the name of this holy child was now solemnly declared—and that name was "*Jesus*," as indeed had been before fixed by the angel, in what he said both to Mary and Joseph. There are four persons mentioned in the Old Testament whose names were fixed by God, before they were born—Isaac, Ishmael, Josiah, and Cyrus; and two in the New Testament—John the Baptist, and Jesus. Joshua the successor of Moses, and Joshua the rebuilder of the temple, as they bore the name, were eminent types of Jesus, whose name signifies a Saviour, and who was so called, because he saves his people from their sins.

These things were done in Bethlehem; soon after which Joseph and Mary set out with the child Jesus, for Jerusalem.

In further compliance with the Mosaic law, the following things were also attended to: "*And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)* and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, *A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*" We have here an account of two entirely distinct ceremonies interwoven together: the one is the purification of Mary, the other is the solemn presentation of her Son.

There are some ancient authorities* for reading "*their* purification," instead of "*her* purification." Nor would that reading imply that any personal moral defilement adhered to Jesus Christ, any more than a similar inference could be drawn from his circumcision. However, the law here referred to, which is contained in the 12th chapter of Leviticus, speaks only of the purification of the mother. The substance of that law was, that after the birth of a male child, the mother should be considered as ceremonially unclean for forty days in all; and after the birth of a female child, for eighty days. When these days were expired, she was directed to bring to the sanctuary, a lamb for a burnt-offering, or by way of thanksgiving, and a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, for a sin-offering, or by way of atonement. Now that the whole ceremonial law is abrogated, the spirit of this institution teaches, that in all cases of that kind, there should be lively gratitude to God, united with an humble reliance on the atonement of Christ. In cases, however, where the woman was too poor to afford a lamb, it was humanely provided that she should bring two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons—the one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering. In the case of Mary's purification, to which, and not to the presenting of Jesus, the 24th verse refers, it appears, that her circumstances were too confined to admit of her offering a lamb, and that she was obliged to be contented with the turtle-doves, or pigeons. This is one of the many illustrations of the humiliation of Him "who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich."

From the circumstance of the lamb being required, or not required in this law, according to the condition of the party, the general practical rule may be inferred, that God requires of his people sacrifices and services in proportion to their ability. Those who possess much of this world's good, should deal liberally, but those in humbler circumstances need not be afraid that their offering will be despised because it is small. God accepted the turtle-dove as well as the lamb, and he will accept the widow's mite as well as the large contribution. Whether men offer for the support of the poor, or for the cause of religion, they are sure of the divine acceptance, if they offer as God has blessed them, with a cheerful and grateful mind, and in depen-

* Origen, Jerome, Theophylact, and the Syriac.

dence on the true sin-offering made by Jesus Christ. So it is, too, with regard to those sacrifices which are more exactly spiritual. Of persons who excel in knowledge, holy confidence, and zeal, God justly expects prayer, and praise, and other services peculiarly enlightened and ardent. But let not the weak in faith, and the feeble in heart, be discouraged, for they will be accepted according to what they have; God will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will send forth judgment unto victory."

The other ceremony here mentioned, was the solemn presentation of the infant Jesus. From various parts of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, the following particulars are gathered. In commemoration and acknowledgment of the merciful deliverance vouchsafed to the Israelites that night when their first-born were passed over, and the first-born of the Egyptians slain, God directed the Israelites to consider all their first-born, both of man and beast, as consecrated to him. In order, however, to avoid the inconvenience which would have arisen, had the first-born of all the different tribes been taken, the Lord took the whole tribe of Levi, instead of them, causing the congregation to pay five shekels of silver for every individual male first-born that there was above the number of the Levites. Ever after, too, it appears that every first-born male child was taken up and solemnly presented before God, at the tabernacle, or temple, and the sum of five shekels paid for him, or less, as his parents could afford. The first-born of beasts, fit for sacrifice, could not be redeemed, but were appointed to be slain; but the Lord said: "The first-born of man thou shalt surely redeem." Five shekels of silver, too, or about 12s. 6d. of our money, was the price of redemption for a child in the case of what was called "a singular vow." This custom of presentation may be considered as another lesson to Christian parents heartily to dedicate their children to the Lord, and earnestly to pray, that as part of the Church of the first-born, they may be interested in all the benefits of redemption. In this particular respect, then, the law was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, who ought probably to be considered as thus presented, not merely as other children, but also as the first-born among many spiritual brethren, and in the character of the great Mediator.

Luke goes on to relate an occurrence which took place at this moment, of a nature highly pleasing in itself, and honourable to the individual believer, as well as calculated to throw a lustre round Christ, and to distinguish him from all other first-born sons who might then be presented—namely, the part acted by "*Simeon*," who was in the temple at the time. The opinions as to who this Simeon was, are founded on little more than uncertain conjecture. The character, however, here drawn of him is very full and favourable. He was a "*just*" man. He was just, or righteous in all his dealings with his fellow-men; and, as is plain from what afterwards appears of his views, he was a jus-

tified man, being in a state of acceptance with God, through faith in that Messiah, in whom it is said that all the true seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory. And he was a "*devout*" man, a pious man, a man who was frequent and regular, and who took great delight in the exercises of worship. It is further said of him, that he "*was waiting for the Consolation of Israel.*" The Consolation of Israel was, with the ancient Jews, a usual name for the Messiah, whose coming was the most consolatory event that could ever happen. The modern Jews are said often to swear by the Consolation of Israel, or, as they hope to see the Consolation of Israel. Probably, this form of expression may have arisen chiefly from the circumstance of the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, frequently introducing the subject of his coming, by way of comfort under national calamities: as, for example, in the 40th chapter of Isaiah, where the prophecy of the coming of Christ and his forerunner is introduced by these words: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." For this great consolation Simeon waited. He was not like the multitude, who had a general expectation of an earthly deliverer; for he had some insight into the real character in which the Messiah was to appear, and from his knowledge of prophecy, as well, probably, as from divine intimation, he was waiting in anxious expectation of his appearance about that particular time. In like manner, now that he is actually come, we ought to wait for, and earnestly expect, gracious manifestations to our souls. "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait more than they that watch for the morning"—"In that day," the gospel day, "it shall be said, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

We are told, that "*the Holy Ghost was upon*" Simeon; that is, the spirit of prophecy, which had been restrained for about four hundred years, was occasionally upon him, as well as on a few others. As one instance of this, it was divinely intimated, or "*revealed to him*" in some way not particularly described, that before he died, he should see the Lord's Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah. This revelation must have been very comfortable to him, as the testimony given to Enoch before his translation, that he pleased God, must have been to that patriarch. The promise which was given to Simeon, was made good in the most delightful and solemn circumstances. It was so ordered, that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he went into the temple at the very time when "*the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law;*" that is, solemnly to present him as a first-born son to the Lord; and thus Simeon witnessed the first fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the Desire of all nations filling the Lord's house with a surpassing glory, and the Lord, the messenger of the covenant, suddenly coming into his temple.

Though it is not expressly stated, we are left to conclude that

Simeon was, by divine guidance, enabled immediately, and beyond the possibility of mistake, to recognise the promised Messiah. At the long expected, and earnestly wished for sight, the feelings of Simeon were intensely drawn forth; and in token of the lively affection which warmed his heart, he took the holy child into his arms—precious charge! enviable privilege!—and while he thus held him, he “*blessed God*” as the author of such mercy, saying, in the language of elevated devotion and holy joy: “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*” Now lettest thou thy servant depart, or now dismisses, or dissolvest thou thy servant, as when a master says to a servant with whose service he is well pleased, or as any superior says to an inferior, Go in peace.* This mode of expression is also founded on the distinction between the soul and body, and on the soul’s existing in a separate state. Simeon was ready to die in the possession of personal peace with God through faith in Jesus, and in the enjoyment of a delightful complacency in the extensive blessings which he beheld opening up on mankind. This happened “*according to God’s word,*” or gracious promise. None ever trusted in the Lord and were disappointed. Never did there fail, and never shall there fail, one good word of all that the Lord hath promised to his servants. When Simeon saw Jesus, he might justly say that he saw salvation, as all the promises of salvation referred to him, and all the blessings of salvation were purchased by him, and treasured up in him. And this was *God’s* salvation, as it was of God’s contrivance and working out. Having seen this, Simeon was willing to close his eyes on the world. Somewhat like this were the words of Israel to his son Joseph: “Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.” Still more nearly, however, are these words of David parallel in spirit, especially as recorded among his last words: “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire.” Simeon might well rejoice in such a sight, and so might all who beheld and improved it. Blessed were their eyes and ears, which saw and heard these things. Though there is nothing said expressly of Simeon’s age, the common opinion, that he was now far advanced in years, seems to be naturally suggested by the scope of the passage. Having lived to see what had so long been the object of his fondest expectation, he is now well satisfied to die.

Simeon describes, finally, this salvation as a salvation “*which thou*” (addressing himself still to the Lord) “*which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*” God prepared this salvation with a view to set it before all people, in the universal preaching of

* ————— “*Jam respice canos;
Ad mortem dimitte senes.*”

Lacan, v. 275.

Christ, as the object of their faith, hope, and obedience. And as Simeon himself had seen it, so all people were to see it externally, and many savingly. In the words of Isaiah: "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." It is true that Messiah was peculiarly the glory of Israel, literally so called, because of that nation he came, and to them his salvation was first addressed. But he is the glory of all his spiritual Israel, of all believers: they glory only in his cross; to them "he is made wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The light, too, which then arose on Israel, was to illuminate every land. Thus saith the Lord to his Son: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." Thus, though Simeon knew that he was soon to depart, he was not indifferent to the spiritual welfare of the world, which he was to leave behind him. With the solemn prospect of death and eternity but a short way before him, he yet rejoiced in the thought of the spread of the heavenly light when he should be gone. In the same spirit, John the Baptist thus expressed his willingness to go down to the dust, in the certainty of the growing splendour of the Saviour's name: "He must increase, but I must decrease." We have lived to witness much of what they anticipated, yet the full accomplishment is far from being realized. Let us, then, in the meantime, be doing every thing in our power, according to Scripture, towards that happy consummation; and we may rest assured, that there is no danger of anything which we may attempt in that way disturbing the peace of our last moments.

We are told in the last verse before us, that "*Joseph and his*" (that is, Christ's) "*mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*" From the first visit of the angel down to that present moment, and inclusive of that action, and those words of Simeon, wonderful things had happened, and had been said, in relation to their son. At these things they wondered, not in unbelief, but believing them as far as they understood them, and feeling astonished and puzzled with various things which afterwards were made plain. We must be sensible, however, that the more that is known of Christ and his work, the more wonderful do they appear. Nay, it will be in the light of his second coming that he will appear the most admirable of all. When he then comes, it will be to "be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

To say nothing more on the other topics in this passage, let me endeavour to assist you in more fully improving the peculiarly beautiful and instructive account here given, of how Simeon was prepared for a safe and happy death. He took up

the infant Redeemer "in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

And here, *suffer me to remind you of your departure*. If you are far advanced in life, as Simeon is believed to have been, your departure cannot be far distant. Nay, according to the usual course of events, it may be looked on as certain that a few moons will suffice to measure the remaining space of time to a considerable number now present of all ages. Often does it happen that the young and the strong are called away first; and seldom does a Sabbath pass on which, in a large congregation, there is not some person who is a worshipper and a hearer for the last time. But, however long you may remain, you must remove at last—you must depart. You must go and leave your houses, and your property, and your business, and your friends, and ordinances, and the whole world, and all that is therein, behind you. Do not put this idea altogether away from you. Whatever repugnance to it you may naturally feel, your highest interests require that it should be familiar to you. "O that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end!"

It being certain, then, that you must depart, *is it not desirable that you should depart in peace?* Have you ever considered what an awful thing it is to die in sin, whether the sinner be then sensible of his situation or not? How awful when the soul, awakened to see its danger, instead of departing in peace, is overwhelmed with terror, and driven away in its wickedness! How awful, too, when the soul departs in a state of false peace, and when the wicked have no bands in their death! This only renders their state the more hopeless. It is as if, when bewildered in a midnight journey, a man were to be drawn aside by a transitory meteor, which suddenly leaves him in total darkness and irremediable ruin. He must be infatuated, who could wish thus to die. Have you, on the other hand, considered the joy, or at least the peace and safety, of the death of believers? We do not mean to say that the death of all good men is equally happy, and that none of them are then subject to any uneasiness. Different things are necessary to a Christian's dying with all that joy which his state is calculated to inspire. It is necessary, for instance, that his mind should be clear, and that he should have the free use of his faculties. Some die in a state of mental perturbation, arising solely from the violence of disease, which prevents them from enjoying the consolations of religion themselves, and evidencing their faith to others. As this is the case with some of the pious, what a warning is it to the wicked! Besides, the comfort of dying Christians depends on the clearness of their views, and the strength of their faith; and whatever there may then be of dimness in the one, or of weakness in the other, will immediately operate to their discomfort. It is certain, however, that the death of believers is blessed in itself, and in

its consequences, whether they enjoy full comfort at the time or not. They have ground for resignation, and even for triumph, though they perhaps cannot see it so clearly as they ought. As it is true, on the one hand, that a false confidence will not save an unrenewed man, it is equally true, on the other, that a groundless apprehension will not condemn a true believer. The Lord does sometimes leave his people to struggle, for a little, in some uncertainty with the king of terrors; but is not that a happy death which, though it be attended with some anxiety, leads to eternal life? How must the desponding saint be struck with delightful surprise, when he finds that the last pang has transported him into the blissful presence of his Maker! Generally speaking, however, much peace, and comfort, and positive enjoyment, are the portion of dying Christians. Nor need this be deemed incredible or surprising. They have peace with God, and peace in their own consciences: they have the Lord to strengthen them, and his rod and staff to comfort them: and they have the prospect of a blessed and glorious immortality. Ask yourselves again, then, if it be not desirable thus to depart in peace? Is not every one ready to say: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

Now, if such be your wish, surely you ought seriously to consider how that wish may be realized. And here the example of Simeon will inform you that you cannot depart in peace till you have seen the salvation of the Lord. You all have, it is true, the outward light of salvation. The way of it is clearly revealed in the Gospel. But this is not enough. There are many who see as if they saw not, and hear as if they heard not, because they do not consider, nor understand. It is necessary that you see, understand, and experimentally know, the real nature, the prescribed method, the exact suitableness, and the glorious excellence, of gospel salvation. You must see it so as to behold it with delight, and to have a personal enjoyment of its blessings. More particularly, you must see the salvation of the Lord as a salvation from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin.

If you would die in peace, you must see the salvation of the Lord as a salvation *from the guilt and condemnation of sin, through faith in the atonement*. The slightest consideration must convince you that you are naturally sinners, and therefore guilty and condemned; and you must also see, if you follow in the least the light of Scripture, that you cannot of yourselves effect your deliverance. But in your distress, the Lord proclaims: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." This righteousness was wrought out by the obedience and death of the Son of God, who is therefore called "our righteousness," and our "salvation." And he actually becomes the salvation of his people by their believing in him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

If, then, you would depart in peace, you must imitate the action of Simeon as nearly as circumstances permit. You cannot, indeed, literally take the Saviour into your arms; but you must receive him into your hearts—you must take him into the arms of your faith and love. It is this, and this alone, which can give you just confidence in your last moments. It is necessary, absolutely necessary, that you have this view of the subject, this sight of salvation. Without this, you can have no clear perception of the truth, no relish for the doctrines of grace, no supreme attachment to the cause of Christ, no solid peace in your departure. Renounce, then, every other ground of hope, and rest on this firmly and solely. See that this be your confidence; see that you be building on the foundation laid in Zion; so when the rain descends, the floods come, and the winds blow—in other words, when sickness seizes, when sorrows encompass, when death threatens, and when the world is about to sink from under you—then it shall appear that you have built on the Rock of Ages.

In connection with this, it is necessary, in order to your departing in peace, that you see the Lord's salvation as a salvation also *from the power of sin*—from sin itself, as well as from its guilt and punishment. Simeon not only “waited for the Consolation of Israel,” but was “a just and devout man.” In him faith and holiness went hand in hand. And thus “God hath chosen” all his people “to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit,” as well as through “the belief of the truth.” If you would die in peace, you must undergo that complete change of sentiment and disposition which is called regeneration. The seed, too, which is then sown must grow up, and, in progressive sanctification, be producing all the fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.” The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, must teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.

Now, this salvation from sin itself you can only obtain, as already hinted, in connection with salvation from guilt, through the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is through the knowledge and belief of the same truth by which they are justified that God's people are sanctified.

To all of you, then, is this great salvation now exhibited, and let it be your earnest desire savingly to see it. Let each of you adopt the language of the Psalmist: “Let thy mercies come upon me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word.—My soul fainteth for thy salvation.—Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.—Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen,” and “that I may glory with thine inheritance.” If you see this, you see enough; if you gain this, you gain enough. It is a saying of the wise man, that “the eye is not satisfied

with seeing," any more than the ear is filled with hearing; and in reference to all worldly things, this is perfectly correct. There is, however, one object which is sufficient to satisfy your mind; and that is, Christ with his salvation. Direct but a believing eye to this object, and you will find what you cannot find elsewhere; your spiritual vision will be satisfied, the void in your heart will be supplied, henceforth you will be habitually looking forward into eternity, and at God's command you will be ready to shut your eyes on all created objects, and to say: It is enough, Lord; let me die, now that I have seen thy blessed face. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

LECTURE X.

LUKE II. 34, 35.

“ And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; 35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

You will recollect how, forty days after the birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary went up with him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, for the double purpose of the legal purification of the Virgin herself, and the solemn presentation to God of her Son as a first-born male child. While they were engaged in presenting the child, and offering the prescribed sacrifices in the temple, the aged and holy Simeon, who had been graciously informed that before he died he should see the Lord's Christ, was divinely led to the temple. As soon as he beheld the long wished-for child: “ he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” On this it is said, that Joseph and Christ's mother “ marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.”

Now, in immediate connection with this, it is added, in the first words of the passage under consideration, that “ *Simeon blessed them.*” Though probable, it is not quite clear, that he blessed the child Jesus. As Paul takes occasion to say, when stating the case of Melchizedek and Abraham, “ Without contradiction the less is blessed of the greater,” it may appear difficult to suppose that Simeon could bless Christ. At the same time, though we cannot suppose that he blessed him authoritatively, as the patriarchs of old blessed their sons, or as Moses and Aaron blessed the people, yet he might bless him in another sense. Men are called on to bless God—that is, to give glory and thanks to Jehovah himself; and we are sure that in this sense “ all nations shall call Jesus blessed.” With regard, indeed, to Joseph and Mary, there is no difficulty in conceiving what may have been the general nature and purport of Simeon's blessing them, though the words he employed are not particularly recorded. He may have given them his authoritative blessing, solemnly declaring that God had already blessed them: he may have given them his precatory blessing, praying that the favour of God might rest upon them: and he may have

given them his prophetic blessing, foretelling that they should be highly honoured, and very happy, through their Son.

Having blessed both parents, Simeon then addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord, in the words just read. This address naturally divides itself into four clauses : each of these I shall endeavour first to explain, and then to assist you in applying to yourselves.

In explaining this passage, the

First clause demanding our attention is : “ *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* ”

Every thing that comes from God is naturally fitted, and we may therefore say originally intended, for good. In consequence, however, of the judicial curse which is entailed on fallen men, and still more evidently in consequence of their own wilful and obstinate transgression and neglect, almost all his gifts are often perverted, and become, though not the cause, yet the occasion, of evil. It is thus with *common temporal blessings*, for all which God ought to be thanked and praised, but which ultimately prove advantages or disadvantages, according as they are either improved or abused. For example, it is God who maketh *rich* ; and *riches*, when they are properly received, and used to the glory of God and the good of men, are a great blessing ; but when they are coveted, or rested in as the chief good, or abused in extravagance and profligacy, they become the root of all evil, and drown men in destruction and perdition. In God’s hand it is, too, to make *great*, and to give power and honour to men ; and those great men who conduct themselves in a manner becoming their exalted station, are honourable and happy indeed ; but the more pre-eminent in station men are, the more sinful and the more ruinous does misconduct in them become, and the more frequently is it seen that their “ pride goeth before a fall.” *Learning* is justly accounted honourable and valuable ; and it actually not only promotes a man’s worldly distinction, but proves a blessing in the highest sense of the word, when it is consecrated to God, and possessed in humility and virtue ; but there are few greater curses than learning prostituted to irreligion, and either usurping the place of the wisdom which is from above, or co-existing with habits of immorality. *Health* is a blessing, without which all other earthly blessings are of little avail ; and when it is spent in piety and usefulness, it enables men to rise to a high degree of credit and success, and even moral excellence ; but when its stability is presumed on to encourage men to proceed in a career of dissipation, and its vigour wasted on crimes, or on trifles, it becomes the occasion of multiplied evils, and of deep degradation. *Affliction* is kindly sent for the benefit of transgressors ; and when its voice is listened to, it recalls them from their wanderings ; but when it is unimproved, it only hardens men more and more, and sinks them deeper and deeper in misery. Nor is it otherwise even with *life* itself. “ Skin upon skin,” one piece of valuable property

after another—nay, “all that man hath, will he give for his life.” Every man is bound to praise the almighty author and preserver of his life; and the life that now is, when rightly improved, is the means of rising to the happiness of the endless life which is to come: but life spent and closed in nature’s guilt and depravity, is to all who so spend it and who so close it, the forerunner of the second death, so that it would have been better for them if they had not lived at all—far better for them if they had never been born.

Now, the same principle prevails with regard to the *coming of Christ* into the world, and we may add, with regard to all *outward religious privileges*. “Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;” that is, for the fall of some, and for the rising again of others. Unquestionably, the coming of Christ is the most blessed event that ever happened for mankind; and the express purpose for which God sent his Son into the world, was, “not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” At the same time, it is equally unquestionable, that the actual effect of the gospel is different, nay, directly opposite, on the two great classes of men, believers and unbelievers.

Christ “*is set for the fall of many.*” He is set—that is, he is divinely constituted or appointed to his office. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between the sense in which he is set for the fall, and that in which he is set for the rising of men. With regard to those who are saved, most direct passages, as well as the general bearing of Scripture, teach that their salvation is in consequence of an express and everlasting purpose of God, in reference to them individually, for the accomplishment of which purpose he exerts a positive energy. Hence, the whole glory of their salvation is due to God. With regard, however, to those who perish, we must not suppose that God exerts any power, or positive influence, of an unfavourable nature, on their minds; for that would be to make him the author of sin. He is said to harden and to blind, when he merely leaves men to their own wilful hardness and blindness. Hence, the whole blame, or procuring cause, of their ruin, rest with themselves. When Christ, then, is said to be set for the fall of some, the meaning is, not that their fall was the object which induced God to send him into the world, nor yet that Christ is the cause of their ruin, nor even that God furnished them with what in itself had a tendency to their ruin; but the meaning is, that they themselves perversely took occasion, from Christ’s coming, to aggravate their guilt and condemnation, by rejecting him, as was previously foretold by the prophets. This remark serves to throw light on the following passage in Isa. viii. 14, from which, indeed, it also receives light—a passage, too, to which the clause under review seems directly to refer: “And he shall be for a sanctuary,”—this is the purpose intended, and the purpose actually served, to believers; but, in effect, to

unbelievers, he shall be “for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be snared, and be taken.” Let us compare this passage with that in Isa. xxviii. 16: “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” And let us see how both these passages are brought together and applied by Peter, in his First Epistle, 2d chapter, from the 6th verse: “Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, he is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word; whereunto also they were appointed”—that is, left, according to God’s decree, to their unbelief, for which they would be justly punished.

Accordingly, we find that such, in fact, was the result of Christ’s coming, and of his offered salvation, to many of the Jews. Their perverse minds found in him, who was yet altogether glorious and lovely, many pretences for dissatisfaction—many occasions of stumbling and falling. They were offended at his lowly birth and humble appearance, saying: “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” They were offended at the doctrines he taught, and the purity of heart and life which he enjoined. They were especially offended at his ignominious death, and at the proposed way of acceptance through faith in the atonement he thus made. “The Jews require a sign,” says Paul, “and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Now, by this obstinate rejection of the Saviour, many in Israel fell deeper and deeper into guilt. “If I had not come and spoken unto them,” said our Lord, “they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.” He told them, too, that though they were, in point of privileges, exalted to heaven, they would, by their abuse of them, be cast down to hell; and that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them. On account of their rejection of Christ, they fell, as a nation, into temporal ruin; and however awful, it is not to be disguised, that those of them who thus despised to the last Jehovah’s best gift to men, fell into ruin for ever.

This heaven-born child, however, was also set “*for the rising again of many.*” The whole human race were fallen—fallen from holiness, and happiness, and God—fallen into sin and misery, and condemnation and helplessness. But Christ came to raise sinners up again from this fallen condition—“he came to seek and to save those who were thus lost.” He came that

they might have life, and that, too, more abundantly. He raises them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This blessed change he produces when, by his Word and Spirit, he effectually says to the sinner: "Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He raises men to a state of acceptance and progressive holiness here; and he will raise them by a glorious resurrection to heavenly happiness hereafter.

In this saving sense did many of the Jews rise through Christ. Though the generality of his own nation received him not, yet many did; and to those who received him, he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name. And however fallen the condition of Israel is at the present day, it must not be forgotten that there shall yet be a glorious rising again, when they shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather, through their fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles. Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, how much more their fulness? Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved."

2. Simeon says that Christ is set "*for a sign that shall be spoken against.*" He was to be to many a sign, or rather a mark, or butt of contradiction. There may here be a reference to an object, or mark, set up for the purpose of aiming at it arrows, or darts. Thus Job said: "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. He hath set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about; he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare." * Or, in Christ's being called a sign, there may be a reference to those prophets in Old Testament times, who were set up as signs, that their person and demeanour might forcibly call the attention of the people to the commissions which they had to execute. Thus Isaiah said: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in Mount Zion." †

Now, the history, character, doctrines, and miracles of Jesus Christ, made him very conspicuous. He became an object of general attention, attracting almost every eye, and employing almost every tongue. Being by a few beheld with lively faith, and received with cordial love, he was, of course, by those few, spoken of as became his real excellence, and pointed out, and celebrated, and recommended, as worthy of universal acceptance and universal praise. His general reception and treatment, however, were quite the reverse of this. He was opposed, and spoken against by the body of the nation. With the exception of some short-lived admiration, which the energy of his words, and the glory of his works, at times extorted from prejudice itself, the current of opposition ran strongly against him. In order to

* Job xvi. 11.

† Isa. viii. 18.

overwhelm him, they had recourse, without scruple, to misrepresentation, falsehood, and abuse. In this, the Scribes and Pharisees, who, from their profession, ought to have acted a very different part, took the lead. They endeavoured to entangle him in his talk. They said: "Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They said that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and that he himself had a devil, and was mad. On his mock trial they insulted him and smote him; they blindfolded him, and struck him on the face; they bade him prophecy who smote him, "and many other things blasphemously spake they against him." When he hung on the cross, the multitude taunted him, and the very malefactors railed on him. In reference to his personal treatment in these and similar ways, the apostle says to the Hebrews: "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

As Jesus Christ identifies himself with his cause and people, it must be considered, also, as a fulfilment of this prediction, that they met with similar treatment after he left the world. Thus we read, that when almost the whole city of Antioch came together on the Sabbath-day to hear the word of the Lord, the Jews, who saw multitudes, "were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." At Ephesus, too, it is said that, "divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude." In like manner, the words of the chief Jews at Rome to Paul,* expressly and fully corroborate this point: "As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." Paul, too, in writing to the Corinthians, says that the apostles were made "a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men; being reviled and defamed, and being treated as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things."

The same spirit has been more or less strikingly displayed by the enemies of Christ and his cause, down to the present day. As to the Mohammedans and Jews, what torrents of abuse have they been accustomed to pour forth against Jesus and Christianity! As to infidels and profane persons among ourselves, "do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called?" And even on the part of many who do not profess to reject Christianity in general, is there not much gainsaying and opposition to sound and scriptural views of Christ's person and work? and is not every point that is gained for real, vital religion, gained after a struggle, and by the power of divine grace causing the truths of the Word to prevail over the prejudices, and errors, and false reasonings of the natural mind, which is ever enmity to God? Thus Simeon truly said: "Behold, this child is set for a sign that shall be spoken against."

* Acts xxviii. 22.

3. We have here a remarkable illustration of Christ's and Mary's sufferings, in a parenthesis: "*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.*" There have been some who have considered these words, which are addressed by Simeon to Mary, as predicting that she was to suffer martyrdom; and some early Christian writers affirm that this accordingly happened. This opinion, however, seems to have arisen from a misunderstanding of this clause, and not to have rested on any well-authenticated account; for the general current of the opinion of antiquity is quite in favour of her having died a natural death. Nor is there any necessity for explaining the clause before us as referring to her death at all. It very naturally admits of an interpretation which does not require that Mary should have died a violent death to fulfil it. It is a common and natural way of speaking, to compare mental distress, from whatever source it arises, and whether personal or relative, to a sword, or dagger, thrust into one's heart. Such things are said to wound and cut, and pierce men to the soul or heart. Very similar is the figure used by the Psalmist, when he says: "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"* So also the wise man says: "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword."† In this view, then, this clause is to be understood as foretelling the deep distress which Mary was to undergo in consequence of her sympathy with her Son in his sufferings.

Mary attended much on Jesus; and there can be no doubt that, as a mother, she took a deep interest in all that befell him, and was most tenderly attached to him. When, at twelve years of age, he tarried behind in the temple, she and Joseph became exceedingly anxious, and "sought him sorrowing." She was with him at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, and carefully observed all that passed there. Indeed, after Christ entered on his public ministry, Joseph being probably by that time dead, Mary seems to have generally accompanied her Son. The various indignities, therefore, and hardships to which she saw him exposed, must have occasioned her all along much pain. All this, however, was little, in comparison with what she endured when she witnessed his last sufferings and death. It is truly affecting to think that she was present when he was crucified. These are the words of the evangelist John: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."‡ Now, from this passage it appears that Mary was actually standing on Mount Calvary when Jesus hung on the ignominious, accursed, and bloody tree. Nay, it appears that she was, part

* Ps. xlii. 10.

† Prov. xii. 18.

‡ John xix. 25-27.

of the time at least, so near as to hear him speak, and therefore distinctly to see what was passing. Now, what must have been the feelings of any mother for any son, and especially, what must have been the feelings of such a mother for such a Son, on such an occasion? It is true that she appears to have behaved nobly. We do not read of her beating her breast, or wringing her hands, or tearing her hair, or rending her clothes, or fainting away, or filling the air with her shrieks. At this crisis she was, doubtless, supported from on high, the divine strength being made perfect in her weakness. Still, however, admirably as she did conduct herself, what must have been her inward conflict? Certainly her sufferings were sharper than can be described, as she beheld in such a situation him who was her dear and only Son, and who was, moreover, her Saviour and her Lord. We see, then, how exactly and painfully were fulfilled in her the words prophetically addressed to her by Simeon: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

4. The last clause of Simeon's address describes what was to be the consequence of the whole, namely, "*that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*" The previous clause is very properly included in a parenthesis, the effect of which is, that this last clause is not to be viewed as having any special reference to the one going immediately before, but is to be interpreted chiefly, though not perhaps exclusively, as connected with the first two clauses of the address. Christ proving the fall of some, and the rising of others, and being so much opposed and contradicted, the consequence was to be, that the thoughts of many hearts were to be revealed or discovered. The gospel being rejected by some, and received by others, and Christ being praised by a few, and condemned by multitudes, the result was to be a thorough discrimination, and discovery of the state and character of all to whom that gospel was addressed, and that Saviour offered. And so it proved among the Jewish people. The whole nation professed to honour the Father; but their reception or rejection of his Son, showed whether that profession was sincere or not. They all boasted of being Abraham's seed; but the result showed whether or not they were the children of the promise. They all said that they were waiting for Messiah; but it was by his actual appearance that it was discovered whether they were believers or unbelievers. The gospel served to bring to light the faith, humility, and spirituality of some, and the infidelity, pride, and carnality of others. It was, and it still is, difficult to come at men's true character; but the gospel, faithfully represented, always has been, and still is, well fitted to make the discovery. Not that it finds any good; no, it makes them so. But it detects prevalent iniquity and hypocrisy, and shows who really belong to Israel, and who do not.

The opposition, too, which Christ and his people have to encounter, is well fitted to distinguish between the hypocritical and the sincere. In the midst of contradiction, and abuse, and

every kind of persecution, the real friends of Christ stand firm; but the pretended friends, having no root of grace in themselves, are offended and fall away. Jesus said: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind." Some, indeed, continue self-deceived, or hypocrites to the last. But the general result is, that they who are "approved are made manifest," and continue steadfast, while others "go out that they may be made manifest that they are not of us." In short, whatever men are, the gospel searches and proves them, both to themselves and to others. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Having thus given some explanation of the four parts of this address of Simeon to Mary, I shall endeavour to assist you in applying them to yourselves.

1. *Remember that the gospel must prove the means, either of your rise, or of your fall*—the means either of promoting you to unspeakable happiness, or of aggravating your guilt and ruin. It is not a matter of indifference, which you may innocently and safely either attend to or disregard; but it is one of infinite moment, involving all that is important in your endless character and destiny. It must prove to you either "the savour of death unto death, or the savour of life unto life." It will prove your fall, if you are aiming chiefly at the possessions, and pomp, and honour of the world; because such an aim will lead you to dislike a religion by which the world would be crucified to you, and that dislike will imply guilt, and entail condemnation. The gospel will prove your fall, if you give yourselves up to sin, or to the love of pleasure more than to the love of God; for with such a life its holy nature and holy requisitions are utterly incompatible; and if it do not sanctify you, it will leave you in deeper pollution, and under a heavier doom than it found you. It will be the occasion of your fall, if you are wise in your own eyes and lean to your own understanding; for you will be offended at the mental simplicity, docility, and submission which it requires. It will prove the innocent occasion of your fall, if you cherish a spirit of self-righteousness; for its whole system necessarily implies your total depravity and helplessness by nature, and uniformly inculcates the renunciation of all trust in yourselves, and the reliance for acceptance by faith on the merits of Christ alone; whereas, on your scheme, you can never attain to righteousness, because you seek it not by faith, but by the works of the law, for you stumble at that stumbling-stone, as it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." But if, on the contrary, escaping these entanglements of error and sin, you submit to the teaching, and grace, and government of the Redeemer, then his coming will ultimately prove to you the

most blessed of all events, and his glorious gospel the most important of all advantages; and brought up out of the horrible pit and miry clay of nature's darkness, and guilt, and misery, into which you had fallen, and in which your formerly ill-directed struggles to extricate yourselves were only sinking you deeper and deeper, your feet will be placed on the solid rock, your goings will be established, you will be gradually ascending in the scale of spiritual excellence here, and hereafter you will rise higher than can be described or conceived.

2. *Speak not against Christ, but for him.* Though it is here foretold that he is to be a sign to be spoken against, it must not be supposed that those who make him their butt of contradiction are innocent. "It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." You do not, perhaps, openly and avowedly broach infidel sentiments, or blaspheme the Saviour; but beware of all approaches to such iniquity. Beware of speaking lightly of Christ, or his ordinances, or his doctrines, or his people. Sit not in the seat of the scornful; great are the guilt and danger of scorers. The arrows which they shoot at this sacred mark must recoil upon themselves. Their mischief shall return upon their own head, and their violent dealing shall come down upon their own pate. When the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, he will convince ungodly sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him.

Instead, then, of speaking against Christ, speak for him. Assert his honour. Espouse his cause. Embrace every suitable opportunity of recommending him to others. You may well do so, when you consider the obligations to him under which you lie. Let a spirit of attachment and devotion to him fill your mind; and then out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will speak, your heart will be often inditing good matter; "and your tongue will be like the pen of a ready writer," when you speak of the things touching your King.

It is proper, also, to be aware that those who faithfully follow Christ may expect, more or less, to be themselves spoken against. Let them prepare for this, and let them be unmoved by it when it comes; for it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.

3. *Let all the sufferings and indignities of the Redeemer be matter of grief to you.* You see how Mary suffered in Christ's sufferings—how they pierced through her soul, like a sword. In like manner, you ought never to hear, or to read, or to think, of his sufferings, without grief; for though laying the foundation of hope to you, they were truly awful in themselves; and it was your sins which rendered them necessary. Look on him, then, whom others have pierced, and whom you have pierced, and mourn. But it is not merely in reference to what Jesus himself personally endured when on earth, that this clause should be improved by you. We have said that he identifies himself with

his cause, and with his people. The cause, then, of true religion, ought deeply to interest your feelings. As its prevalence and spread should give you joy, so circumstances adverse to it should occasion you distress. So also, if you really love the Lord himself, you will love his people, and sympathize with them in all their trials and sorrows, and especially in all they suffer for his sake, and in consequence of faithfulness to the truth. Besides, though our Lord's bodily presence is withdrawn, and though his personal sufferings are at an end, he is to be considered, not only as universally, actually, spiritually, and invisibly present with us, but also as specially, virtually, and sensitively present, in his name, and honour, and laws. To say nothing of those who are themselves profane swearers, there are many who can, without uneasiness, hear the name of God and of Christ profaned, and curses and indecencies uttered, by others. It will not be so with you, however, if you are Christians indeed. From such sounds you will recoil with grief and horror; and if unavoidably doomed to hear them, they will be to you nothing short of what may be called, a sword piercing through your soul—they will be to you a mental torture. In short, whatever indignities or injuries are done to your God, or his Christ, or his laws, or his people, you will feel as done to yourselves. This will be to resemble, in your measure, the Son of God himself, who, as we read in the 69th Psalm, when addressing his heavenly Father, used the following words, which are quoted in the Epistle to the Romans,* where they are expressly declared to have been written for our learning: "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me."

Finally. *Suffer the gospel to have its proper heart-searching effect on you.* It is here said, that the result of it is to be, that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed; and this is a result, not to be deprecated, but to be desired. Whatever may be the nature of the discoveries, it is desirable that they should be made, in order that what is right and pleasant may be cherished and carried forward, and what is wrong and painful may be deplored and corrected. Consider how little it could avail you, to conceal your real state from your fellow-creatures, or even, as is no doubt possible, from yourselves. Every thing relating to you is naked and open to that God with whom you have to do; and the hour is coming, in which he will set in array before sinners their transgressions, in a way that they cannot shut their eyes or steel their hearts against them, and will reveal them to their everlasting confusion, before an assembled universe. But if your state be never revealed to you till then, it will then be too late—all hope will be over. The present is the time for any salutary discovery. Though it is neither in general necessary, nor in many cases desirable, that the state of your thoughts should be minutely revealed to others, it is absolutely necessary that you be brought to an experimental discovery of it yourselves.

* Rom. xv. 3, 4.

Now, as it is the gospel which is the great touchstone of character, be willing, nay, be very desirous, it may be applied as the test of yours. Beware, lest preconceived notions, or obstinate prejudices, or sinful attachments, exert over you, as they did over many of the Jews of old, a fatal influence, which may lead you to reject the gospel altogether. Endeavour, when the touchstone is to be applied to you, to let it have justice done to it, by a direct application to your hearts, without any obstacle intervening. Examine its evidences with candour, receive its doctrines with simplicity of faith; and submit to its precepts with all cheerfulness. Study, especially, to yield yourselves up without reserve to the searching influence of the truth, when you listen to its announcement in public; such a temper of mind would, in those of you who are not religiously impressed, lead to the happy result to which the apostle adverts in writing to the Corinthians; "If therefore, when the whole church are come together into one place," and prophesying, or plain and intelligible teaching is going on, "there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in" and with his faithful servants, "of a truth."* Thus, too, those of you who already believe, would gradually become better acquainted with your own hearts, and would obtain more complete deliverance from error and sin, and greater conformity to the will and image of God. With this view, while you carefully attend to your frame of mind, recollect your own insufficiency, and the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of your own hearts, and the difficulty of knowing them; and recollecting all this, be earnest in prayer to God, that he would be graciously pleased to reveal to you your true character, and enable you to proceed accordingly. Say to him; "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The Lord grant that the weapons of divine truth may, in all of you, prove "mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

* 1 Cor. xiv. 23-25.

LECTURE XI.

LUKE II. 36-52.

“ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; 37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. 41. Now his parents went to Jerusalem, every year at the feast of the passover. 42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. 43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. 48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? 50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

IN Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female. Both are by nature equally fallen and helpless, both are equally invited to partake of the blessings of salvation, and both are equally bound to conduct themselves as becomes candidates for heaven. Though the far greater number of those who have been favoured with the extraordinary and miraculous gifts of the Spirit have been of the male sex, and though the ordinary office of the ministry belongs to it, yet there are not wanting instances in Scripture of persons of the other sex who were divinely inspired to prophesy—that is, to instruct the people, and publicly to praise the Lord. In the Old Testament, we read of the prophetesses, Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. From the days of Malachi, indeed, to the time of Christ, a period of about four hundred years, the gift of prophecy had ceased altogether; then, however, it was revived; so that in the times of Christ and the apostles, in general, as well as on the particular day of Pentecost, were fulfilled the words of the Lord by Joel: “It shall come to pass, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall

dream dreams, your young men shall see visions ; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids, in those days, will I pour out my Spirit." We formerly considered what Elisabeth and the Virgin Mary spoke under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and we have now before us the somewhat similar case of the prophetess Anna.

The name "*Anna*," or Ann, which has become so common, signifies gracious. This Anna was "*the daughter of Phanuel*," of whom we know nothing further. She was "*of the tribe of Aser*." Aser, or Asher, was one of the ten tribes, that, under Jeroboam, broke off at once from the government of David's family, and from the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and that were overthrown and carried captive by the Assyrians. Of these ten tribes, however, as this case shows, there were individuals and families who adhered to Judah, and continued to observe and enjoy the divinely appointed ordinances at Jerusalem.

This Anna having been only seven years married, lost her husband in early life, and continued a widow till her death. Some commentators think the eighty-four years should be reckoned from the commencement of her widowhood, which would make her considerably above a hundred years of age ; the majority, however, are of opinion that her age altogether was eighty-four years. It is said of her, that "*she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day*." Probably this is not to be understood in the most absolute sense of the words ; but it certainly implies that she waited on all the public services, especially attending regularly both at the morning and evening sacrifices and prayers, and frequently also spending at other hours a great proportion of her time in devotion. Having now no earthly charge, and being unfit for earthly business, she could properly and commendably employ more of her time in this way than would have been right in those in other circumstances. While, therefore, we ought neither to practise nor countenance unnatural, unscriptural, and superstitious austerities, we must beware of running into the extreme of condemning such instances of sincere and devoted piety as was that of Anna.

She was now abundantly recompensed for her long and devout attendance at the temple, by the sight of her earnestly wished for Redeemer. So may all who wait constantly on God in his courts, expect to see the Saviour at last ; and hearers should take care never to be absent unnecessarily, lest they should miss the very opportunity during which those subjects are treated, and those views of the Saviour are given, which, as being more peculiarly suited to their case, are most calculated, and would probably be most effectual, for their benefit. It was so ordered, that Anna, who was never long away from the temple, came in at the very moment when Christ was solemnly presented, and Simeon was speaking. "*She gave thanks likewise unto the Lord*." Addressing herself to Jesus, as Simeon had

done, she joined in with Simeon, she *homologated** what he had said, making her confession, or acknowledgment, to the Lord; praising him as her Saviour, and giving thanks that she had lived to see him. And as, notwithstanding the errors and sins generally prevalent among the Jews, there was among them a remnant of believing and pious persons, who rightly understood the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and were about this time looking and longing for that spiritual redemption which he was to work out; Anna, in addition to what she said in the temple, afterwards spoke of Christ to all these believing expectants who were in Jerusalem. It appears she knew their character, and where to find them; and she did not fail to make known to them the welcome news of Messiah's advent. In like manner it is right that the more experienced Christians of any city, or neighbourhood, should cultivate an acquaintance with each other, and communicate with each other on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; for thus they will not only consult their own edification and comfort, but may be instrumental in diffusing the same spirit among others around them.

From the 39th verse to the end of the chapter, we have a few brief notices of the early life of Christ, from this time to the commencement of his public ministry—a period, probably, of about thirty years.

We read in the 39th verse, that, "*when they*" (Joseph and Mary) "*had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own city, Nazareth.*" It is to be recollected, however, that Luke entirely omits two remarkable events which took place after their first visit to Jerusalem—the visit of the wise men, and the flight into Egypt. These are fully recorded by Matthew in his second chapter. As the wise men found Jesus at Bethlehem, and as the holy family fled, not from Nazareth, but from Bethlehem, into Egypt, the natural conclusion is, that the holy family, when they left Jerusalem after the presentation of Jesus, went first back to Bethlehem, and returned afterwards to Nazareth from Egypt. It is possible, indeed, that they may have gone first to Nazareth, and then returned soon after to Bethlehem, but this is not so likely, or so natural a supposition as the other. It is quite common to find circumstances following after each other in the evangelists, which did not succeed immediately in point of time: indeed, this could not have been otherwise, unless every one of the historians had related the whole of the same facts.

Having remained for some time in Egypt, and Herod being dead, Joseph returned with Mary and Jesus into the land of Israel. It seems to have been Joseph's intention to have settled at Bethlehem, supposing, probably, that as Christ was born there, he ought also to be educated there. Matthew, however, relates that Joseph, "being warned of God in a dream, turned aside into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a

* ὁμολογεῖται.

city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene:" that is according to the joint sense of many prophecies, rather than according to the words of any one prophecy in particular, he was, as the inhabitant of a mean place, to be looked on as a mean person, and loaded with reproach. Nazareth was called Joseph and Mary's "own city," because it was, from the first, the usual place of their residence.

Verse 40: "*And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.*" It is obvious that the divine nature of Christ did not admit of any improvement; in that respect he is absolutely and perfectly "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." But as with regard to his human nature, he was in all things, sin only excepted, made like unto his brethren, he progressively improved in that nature, though, indeed, beyond, yet like other children. He "grew"—his body was healthy, and increased. He "waxed strong in spirit"—his mental faculties unfolded, so that it became obvious he was of a strong understanding, and of lively genius; and all holy affections were in him exceedingly vigorous. Or, he waxed strong by the Spirit, or by the influences of the Holy Ghost, which were given to him without measure. "He was filled with wisdom:" wise in every respect, but especially penetrating and knowing in divine things. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, which made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. We must suppose, too, that though there was no confusion of natures, nor interchange of properties, the indwelling Godhead gradually communicated vigour and increasing holiness to the human soul. We cannot, however, comprehend the mode of intercourse in this great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. "And the grace of God was upon him." Being born free from guilt, and without stain of natural corruption, or propensity to evil, he did not stand in need of pardoning or regenerating grace. But whereas other children are naturally children of wrath, he was naturally a child of grace, or favour. Instead of having foolishness bound up in his heart, the seeds of wisdom and holiness were in him, which culture soon brought forth into vigorous growth. And thus growing in all holy habits, he grew more and more in the estimation and love of his heavenly Father.

We are told, in the 41st verse, that it was the constant practice of his parents to go up yearly to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover. All the males were enjoined by the law to appear before the Lord at Jerusalem three times a-year, namely, at the feasts of pentecost, of tabernacles, and of the passover. Though it was only the men who were expressly bound to go up, yet it appears that many of the women, who had it in their power, also attended, especially at the feast of the passover, which was the most plainly evangelical of the three. The believing and

pious Mary did not grudge the fatigue and expense, but was careful to avail herself of the returning opportunities for her spiritual benefit. Worldly business, however important, must not be suffered to interfere with religious duties; and public ordinances must be frequented, even though the distance and the fatigue should be great. How inexcusable, then, are they among ourselves, who allow the cares and trifles of life to occupy the place in their hearts, and the time, which are due to God! And what will they be able to advance in their own defence at last, who can now neglect the clear, noble, and delightful ordinances of the gospel, when these ordinances are to be had within a few minutes' walk of their own door?

According to the usual custom of the feast, Joseph and Mary "*went up to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old,*" and took him along with them. There was no particular age fixed by the law, at which the sons of the Jews were obliged to go up to the public feasts. It is said, however,* that it was usually held by their doctors, that children who were children of the covenant in virtue of their circumcision, became what they called children of the commandment at twelve years of age, and were then expected to attend to all the ceremonies, as members of the congregation. Not but that they might be present at religious ordinances sooner, but they were not till then treated as adult members.

What a striking circumstance was Christ's attending the pass-over! Not even his nearest friends understood what was predicted, or were aware of what was to come; but he knew for what purpose he was sent, and had a clear and full view of all that lay before him. He was to effect a far greater deliverance than that which the Jewish ordinance commemorated. The paschal lamb was a shadow of himself. He was himself the "Lamb of God," who was to take away the sin of the world, and on the blessings of whose redemption his people were to keep a continual feast, and to be nourished up to life eternal.

Joseph and Mary, we are told, "*fulfilled the days;*" that is, they observed all the solemnities, and remained the full time, of the seven days of unleavened bread. On which we may remark, that during our Christian solemnities, we should not feel as unwillingly detained before the Lord, nor desert them in the middle, nor long for them to be over, that we may return to the business or amusements of life; but we should persevere with pleasure, and continue our bodily attendance, and our mental interest, till their conclusion.

When the feast was over, Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem, on their journey back to Nazareth; and so from serving God in his temple, his people must return to serve him in the world. Jesus, however, delighted, no doubt, with the sacred exercises of the temple, tarried behind in Jerusalem—a circumstance of which Joseph and Mary were not aware. Though he was not within

* Grotius, Lightfoot, Wotton's Miscell., Dr A. Clarke.

their sight, they took it for granted that he was at least in company with some of the families who had to travel the same road. The number of travellers must have been very great on such an occasion; especially on the day immediately after the close of the feast, and on the first stage, before the people diverged into many different directions. Joseph and Mary, then, travelled a day's journey, still supposing that Jesus was in the company. In the evening "*they sought him*," where they thought he was most likely to be, "*among their kinsfolk and acquaintance*;" but they could not find him. On this, they returned the next day with great anxiety to Jerusalem, in search of him. At last, "*after three days*"—that is, on the third day after missing him, which was the day after they returned to Jerusalem—they found him in the temple.

They found him, says the evangelist, "*sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions*." The Jews were commanded to teach the things of God diligently to their children; and some say, that when their children were about the age of thirteen, more or less, they were brought before the doctors, or teachers, to be examined as to the proficiency they had made in religious knowledge. Christ, then, had gone in to the apartment where these teachers were employed in giving instruction, by catechising, and allowing the catechumens to propose questions in their turn. Some commentators represent the case as if Jesus had taken his seat with the doctors, as forming one of their number, and had authoritatively appeared as a teacher, to controvert their opinions; and in this view the scene has been called "*Jesus disputing with the doctors in the temple*." They, however, appear to take a more probable and natural view of the subject, who represent it thus. The Jewish teachers were accustomed to sit on a raised circular bench, while their scholars were seated on the floor, and of course a little lower than they, and as it were at their feet; and from the circular shape of the seat, a scholar might be said to be in the midst of them. Paul says he was "*brought up*," or educated, "*at the feet of Gamaliel*:" Mary "*sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard his words*." When, in connection with these circumstances, it is recollected that Jesus was, in all things innocent, made like unto his brethren, and, in particular, exhibited a pattern of becoming filial submission and respect to the public institutions, and that he used all proper means for the progressive improvement of his human nature, is it not most reasonable to conceive of him, on this occasion, as situated just like other young people, though his wisdom and penetration soon appeared very extraordinary? There is not a word said in Scripture of his disputing with the doctors, but only of his hearing them and answering their questions, and putting questions to them in return. We are not told the nature of these questions, but it is said, that "*all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers*." Often did he astonish his hearers afterwards.

“They were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” They said: “Never man spake like this man. How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” Truly did he say: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” Those who heard him in the temple at the early age of twelve, were particularly astonished. While he discovered, in his questions and answers, a depth of wisdom that surpassed not only those of his own years, but the ablest of the doctors, they were, as it might be rendered, in a transport of admiration.*

When Joseph and Mary “*saw him,*” and heard him thus employed, they likewise “*were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.*” These words, doubtless, conveyed a kind of rebuke; and in that sense they cannot be defended. It was hasty to construe his regard to his heavenly Father as a mark of disrespect to his earthly parents. Besides, if there was any culpable neglect in the case, it was on their part, who should have made sure of his company at first, and not have left Jerusalem without him. Yet, though these words cannot be altogether defended, they may be in a great measure excused. They betray, indeed, the weakness, but they also manifest much of the affection and amiableness, of humanity. It may, no doubt, be deemed strange that his parents should have been so terrified and grieved at missing him, after the many extraordinary proofs they had already received of his heavenly origin and wisdom. But it is highly probable that they did not yet fully understand his divine nature and perfections, and therefore did not perceive that no evil could befall him, contrary to his own will. It seems, too, as if the impulse of natural affection had carried away their minds, and prevented them from making the best of the light they had already obtained. The perturbation and distress of parents are well known to be always extreme, when any of their children are missing for any considerable time, and supposed to be lost, or even in danger; and the uneasiness of Joseph and Mary must have been peculiarly great, when labouring under such apprehensions for such a son as theirs.

“*And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?*” Why have ye sought me with so much anxiety? and why did ye not at once conclude where I was to be found? Might ye not have been certain that I was well employed, in prosecuting my Father’s business, and engaging in religious exercises, and promoting true religion? According to a very general opinion, however, this last clause would have been better rendered: “Wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?”† Had they considered the prophecies, how it was said of him that “the zeal of God’s house consumed him,” and how Malachi had spoken of his coming into the temple; had they considered what was said by the angel; and had

* ἐκστασις.

† ἐν οἴκῳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου. See Grotius and others.

they adverted to the whole of Christ's own conduct, they might have concluded that he would be in the temple, and in due time would join them in safety. By calling the temple his Father's house, Christ laid claim to the dignity of the Son of God in the highest sense of the name, as Messiah, and as God's only begotten, well beloved, and eternal Son.

It is said in the 50th verse, that "*they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*" Though believing and obedient, as far as they knew, they were yet far from fully comprehending the whole glorious truths respecting Christ's nature and work, or this saying of his in particular; but, taking in here the last clause of the 51st verse, "*his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.*" It is of much importance to have the memory well stored with the facts and doctrines of Christianity, even though at first we should have but little understanding or feeling of them; for, time, and reflection, and additional information, will, under divine teaching, lead us on gradually into light and practical application. We frequently read of the disciples having this experience. Thus, though they evidently did not understand the sign given, when Christ said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," yet it is said: "When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said."*

Having left Jerusalem, Jesus "*went down*" again "*to Nazareth*" with his parents. Though on the occasion just described, he showed his sense of the superior obligation of his duty to his heavenly Father, when it came into competition, or rather, when it appeared to come into competition, with respect for his earthly parents; yet he habitually displayed the most exemplary attention to filial duty. It is expressly said, that "*he was subject*" to his parents. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled himself. As he undertook to fulfil all righteousness, he faithfully and cheerfully obeyed the fifth commandment. Let us mark the force and obligation of his example. Though his parents were poor and lowly, still he obeyed them. Though Joseph was only his supposed father, still he was subject to him. Though Jesus was considerably advanced in life, and strong, and wise, still he was subject to his parents. Though he was the Son of God, whose name was "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace," still he was subject to his parents on earth. When all this is considered, how can any child plead exemption from the obligation of the fifth commandment?"

The evangelist shuts up his account of the early history of Jesus, in words very similar to those employed before in the 40th verse: "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*" In the perfections of his Godhead,

* John ii. 19-22.

as already observed, there could not be any increase. But as before, so after the age of twelve, he went on in bodily and mental improvement. Growing in all the spiritual excellencies of a sinless humanity, he of course grew also in favour with God. And it is here added, that he grew in favour with men. Those who had the opportunity of witnessing his excellent demeanour, and hearing his enlightened, and edifying, and divine conversation, could not but admire him; and he became a general favourite in the neighbourhood. So of Samuel it is written: "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the Lord, and also with men."

Jesus continued to live at Nazareth till the commencement of his public ministry, when he is believed to have been about thirty years of age. He was the son of a carpenter, and it is likely that he himself wrought at that useful employment. "Is not this the carpenter?" asked some of the people. (Mark vi. 3.) Justin Martyr says, that Jesus, before he entered on his ministry, made ploughs and yokes, which are the work of carpenters. Let not human pride hear this statement with disdain. The maxims of the world must, in many cases, be reversed, before they comport with truth and reason. The Jewish customs required every child to be taught some trade; and it was a saying among them that he who teaches not his son some trade, teaches him to be a thief. This circumstance in our Lord's history must surely be very gratifying to those who follow any lawful trade, and especially the trade in question. And let us all contemplate, with wonder and adoration, the condescension and love of the Son of God, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became thus poor, and* who, having taken upon him the character of the second Adam, submitted to the sentence denounced on the first—that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow.

Such are the few and brief notices of the early history of this most extraordinary child: and it may perhaps be reckoned strange that we read nothing further of him from his twelfth to about his thirtieth year. It is to be recollected, however, that the object of the Holy Ghost in causing this history to be recorded, was not to gratify our curiosity, but to make us wise to salvation. The wisdom and goodness of God are therefore manifest in omitting many things which were less important, and passing on immediately to what was essential. Had every thing been recorded, the history would have been swelled to an inconvenient extent; the attention might have been diverted from the doctrinal and practical parts; and the impression of the whole would have been less vivid. As it is, the whole account is in a very moderate compass, and, for even weak capacities, in a very manageable length; and yet nothing is omitted of importance for us to know. His mediatorial character, his discourses, his miracles, his spotless example, his atoning death, and his glorious resurrection and ascension, are fully described.

For all this we ought to be very thankful. With all this we should, and we may, easily be well acquainted. And all this we ought to apply to the purpose of our own personal salvation. According to the hyperbolical language of John, if the things which Jesus did "had been written every one, the world itself would not have contained the books." Many other things, says that evangelist, did Jesus do "which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

The verses now explained abound with instruction, and especially to three classes of persons.

First. There is here much *instruction to the aged, in the example of Anna*. A widow of about fourscore and four years, she was what Paul, in writing to Timothy, describes as "a widow indeed, and desolate, trusting in God, and continuing in supplications and prayers night and day:" not one who lived in pleasure, and was therefore dead while she lived; but one who lived to God, and was therefore spiritually alive, to live for ever.

Let me recommend to all persons in advanced life, her spirit of holy abstraction—an abstraction, not from duty, but from the sins, and cares, and vanities of the world. It is difficult to conceive a more unbecoming, or more pitiable object, than a person, whether male or female, far advanced in years, but still engrossed with the trifles of time. It will not be supposed that it is meant to say that aged believers should not be truly happy and cheerful; but very different is the joy of God from the gaiety of the world; very different is the rational and devout placidity from the unreflecting and ill-timed mirth. The vain attempt to go on as formerly, in defiance of the ravages of time, and the failing of nature;—the affectation of the dress, and manners, and enjoyments of youth, in the midst of the infirmities of age;—the haunt of giddy amusement resorted to with feeble and tottering steps;—the wreathy garland on the withered brow;—the world still predominant at threescore and ten, or fourscore;—the heart barricaded against the admission of serious thoughts, and full of the things of sense, when a very short space of time must shut the scene, and dispel every dream, and fix the destiny for ever;—alas! alas! let who will admire this, and call it pleasant, every wise man must feel disposed to exclaim, How incongruous, how absurd, how melancholy, how sinful! But an aged Christian, justly estimating the circumstances in which he is placed, contented, thankful, grave, pious, and consistent—how becoming, how engaging, and how venerable! A very little reflection, too, must suffice to show the impropriety of the aged spending the small remainder of their time in unprofitable amusements, and also the impropriety of others encouraging them to do so. If it be so that some who are far advanced into the vale of years, spend some hours of almost every lawful day in any such manner as merely kills the time, it is truly to be much lamented. If

indeed their mind be in such a state of dotage as to unfit them for any thing useful, there may be some excuse for the habit; but it must be criminal and very hurtful, as long as they are in possession of ability to distinguish right from wrong, and to make any preparation for the unseen world on which they are verging. Far other employments ought to engage them. It was not thus that aged Anna sought her amusement and solace.

Let the aged get interested, deeply interested, about the things of God, and they will not then stand in need of any expedients which are, to say the least, of doubtful propriety. Let them, like Anna, as far as strength permits, regularly and devoutly frequent the temple of God. "Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Let them be much in religious exercises at home. Let them, too, like Anna, speak to others on the subject of religion. "Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Let their lips, which must soon be closed, speak for Christ while they can. Advices from persons of their experience may be well taken, when those from persons of less standing may be despised. Let them study in all things to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, that their hoary heads may be crowns of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. Thus, that God who hath taught, and guided, and blessed them from their youth, will not forsake them when they are old and grey-headed; and they shall safely and happily come to their grave in their full age, like a shock of corn in its season.

Secondly. There is here much *instruction for parents and heads of families in the example of Joseph and Mary*. While every trait in their character shows that they were most exemplary in their domestic habits, they furnish a pleasing and edifying example of attention to public ordinances, not allowing domestic cares to interfere with their attendance on the sanctuary. Now, while, in every case, heads of families should live together as heirs of the grace of God, their regular and devout observance of public ordinances is of much importance, not only to themselves, but in the way of example to their children and domestics. If they themselves are negligent, what else can be expected of their household? Whereas, if they themselves are exemplary, the effect may in general be expected to be excellent. Parents should here feel reminded, also, to bring up their children early to the house of God. Jesus was brought to the temple at Jerusalem, though it was at a great distance from Nazareth, when he was twelve years of age. He may have been there before: and there can be little doubt that he would at an earlier age be taken into the synagogue at Nazareth. So it is important for all parents to accustom their children betimes to the habit of attending on public worship. There is no particular age to be positively fixed on; but, in general, they ought to be brought as soon as they can understand any thing of the service, which

(if proper care be taken of their previous instruction and subsequent examination) is earlier than some suppose. When Ezra presided in worship, and read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading, he did so "before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding."*

Lastly. There is much *instruction to children and young persons in the example of Jesus Christ*. Our Lord came into the world, not only to atone for sin, and to teach men by precepts, but also to set before them a perfect and universal example of duty: and it is obvious that, in this view, the brief account we have of his early years is of much consequence to the young. It is likely that there are several now present, who are just as old as Jesus was when he came up to Jerusalem to the passover, namely, twelve years of age. To those of you, my young friends, who are at that time of life, the few sentences I have to say, in concluding, may be considered as particularly applicable, though they are also sufficiently suitable to those of you who are considerably less, and those of you who are considerably more than that age. Notice here, then, the beautiful example of your blessed Saviour, whom, as he loved you so as to die for you, you are surely bound, by every tie and duty of gratitude, to imitate and to obey.

You see here Christ's love to the temple: for he not only went up with his parents, but delighted in the worship; and, as there was a great reason for it, he remained behind after they were gone. Now, you should not only come up regularly to the house of God, but come up cheerfully and with pleasure. And when you are here, you should not weary to be gone, but pay particular attention to the discourse, which will show your good sense; and you should join heartily in the praises and prayers, which will show your piety. Whatever you may fear, and whatever others may pretend to the contrary, God welcomes you to his courts, and Jesus will be well pleased with your praises. To make you sure of this, remember what is written in the 21st chapter of Matthew from the 15th verse: "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

You see here, too, how Jesus attended on the instruction of the Jewish doctors, or teachers, and how he both answered and asked them questions. So you should be sensible of the great advantage you may derive from being catechised by your parents, or teachers, or ministers: and you should both be at pains to be able to answer the questions which they may ask, and also, in proper time and place, put questions in a modest manner to

* Neh. viii. 2.

them with regard to things in which you wish to be better informed.

You see, further, what a fine pattern of filial duty is here set before you in Christ, who was subject to his parents. If so wise and so great a son as he was subject to his parents, much more ought you to be subject to yours. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." God, under the Old Testament, commanded that the stubborn and rebellious son should be stoned to death: and it is said, in the Book of Proverbs, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Many are the promises, on the other hand, made to dutiful children: "Honour, therefore, thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

You may remember that, in considering how the grace of God was upon Christ, we remarked that he did not need pardoning and renewing grace. We cannot say the same, however, of you, because you are all naturally guilty and depraved. You ought earnestly, then, to seek forgiveness through faith in the blood of Christ, and the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Till this saving change, this beginning of what is good, take place in your hearts, there can be nothing in you acceptable to God; and all your endeavours after the love of God and of religion will be vain. With this foundation laid in your souls, make it your constant study to increase in wisdom as you increase in years and in stature; for thus shall you increase in favour with God, and in favour with all good men: which may the Lord in his mercy grant, for Christ's sake. Amen.

LECTURE XII.

LUKE III. 1-14.

"Now, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2. Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. 3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance; and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11. He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. 14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

AMONG the very numerous considerations which constitute the internal evidence of Christianity, and which, to the conviction of the rational and sincere inquirer, establish beyond controversy the truth of the gospel history, that of the great particularity of the sacred writers is peculiarly remarkable. The annals of imposture show that its authors and abettors commonly study to involve their narrations in perplexity, and to keep to as general terms as possible, while they carefully avoid specifying names, places, and times. Or, if they occasionally, for the sake of deception, act so imprudent a part for the permanent success of their imposture, as to specify such particulars, though their very effrontery may gain them credit for a short time, the eventual consequence always is their detection and disgrace. In civil and criminal trials, too, place and date are expected to be stated; and the establishment or disproof of the leading fact itself, often depends on the correctness of the allegation with regard to the place, and date, and even other circumstances which are in themselves very trivial. Now, the mode pursued by the four evangelists is the very reverse of what might have been expected if they had had any intention to deceive, and the very reverse of what, if they had had such an intention, could have

succeeded in deceiving. It is too obvious to require any illustration, that they are almost constantly specifying names and places, and frequently dates, and giving, in the most easy and artless manner, a vast variety of circumstantial detail. Many of their statements, indeed, being of a private nature, cannot be compared with any other source of evidence, though they all bear the stamp of probability. In many passages, however, the evangelists allude to customs generally prevalent, to occurrences which attracted public attention, to the affairs of nations, to the state of the world at large, and to individual kings and governors, whose lives are recorded by profane historians; and in such passages the evangelists may be, and have been, both by friends and enemies of Christianity, confronted and compared with uninspired authors. Now, in these cases, after the most careful inquiry, the scriptural accounts are found to correspond, not only with each other, but with those of authentic secular history. Nor do the evangelists assign to the subjects of their narration any indefinite or very remote period, or any uncertain scene; but at several of the most important steps they give exact and recent dates, and fix on certain spots, and they often refer to universally acknowledged and undeniable facts. For all this frankness, minuteness, and correspondence, there is no way of accounting, except on the supposition of the truth of the substance of the narration itself.

This remark finds a striking illustration in the particularity with which Luke resumes the thread of his evangelical history in the beginning of his third chapter. The commencement of the ministry of the Baptist, as it was, in the short space of probably a few months, to be succeeded by that of Jesus Christ, was an era of peculiar importance. It is therefore here fixed in several different ways.

First, it is fixed by a reference to the history of the Roman empire, and it is said to have been "*in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar*. Cesar was a title common to the Roman Emperors, as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings. This Tiberius was a man of most cruel and abandoned character. He was the next in order to Augustus Cesar, by whom he was taken as colleague in the empire, three years before Augustus' death. At the death of Augustus, Tiberius became sole emperor. Hence it is obvious that there are two ways in which his reign may be reckoned—either from his accession to the partnership at first, or from the death of Augustus. Each of these methods of computation has its advocates; but it would not at present answer the purpose of edification to enter minutely into the question. According to the more generally received opinion, the reckoning should be from the first accession of Tiberius, which is ascertained, from Roman historians, to have been in the year from the foundation of the city of Rome 764, and thus the fifteenth year of his reign, during which "*the word of the Lord came to John*," will be the year of the city 778,—a date

which corresponds with Christ's being then, or soon after, about thirty years of age.

The date is also fixed, secondly, according to the existing governments in Judea, and the neighbouring countries. It was when "*Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene.*" The Jews had been for some time, in a great measure, subject to the Roman power, and the yoke was gradually more and more riveted. We read, in the 1st chapter and 5th verse, that John and Christ were born "in the days of Herod the king of Judea." That was the Herod commonly called Herod the Great, who, under the Emperor Augustus, held kingly power over Judea in its most extended sense, and who ruled over all the countries mentioned in the verse under consideration. Soon after the death of Herod the Great, to omit many particulars of authentic history, his very extensive government was broken into four parts, which are here enumerated, and these were held by men, called, not kings, but tetrarchs. The word "tetrarch" probably signifies the governor of a fourth part, or one of four governors; though it was afterwards used in the more general sense of governor. The first of these governments here mentioned, is Judea, properly so called. Herod the Great was here immediately succeeded by his son Archelaus, who is mentioned in Matt. ii. 22, as reigning in Judea when the holy family returned from Egypt. Archelaus, however, on account of his mal-administration, was deposed by Augustus, and banished into Gaul. After several intervening governors, or procurators, of Judea, Pontius Pilate was appointed by Tiberius. Pilate was a man of cruel and covetous disposition, of whom we read frequently in the course of the evangelical history.

The second of these governments here mentioned was Galilee, a province of the Holy Land lying towards the north, and divided into upper and lower. It chiefly contained the tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher. Of this province the governor at that time was Herod. This was Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. This is the Herod who caused John the Baptist to be beheaded, and who, with his men of war, happening to be at Jerusalem at the time of Christ's passion, set him at nought.

The next subdivision mentioned is that of Iturea and Trachonitis, names then given to districts of country on the other side of Jordan, part of which belonged to the half-tribe of Manasseh. The governor of this province at that time was Philip, another son of Herod the Great, and half-brother to Herod Antipas. This Philip married Herodias, whom his brother Herod Antipas took in that incestuous intercourse which was condemned by John the Baptist.

The fourth division was Abilene, a small tract of country lying between Libanus (or Mount Lebanon) and Anti-Libanus.

The tetrarch of this country was Lysanias, who, as his territories were very limited, made no great figure in the world. Such was the political state of these countries at this time.

The date is fixed, lastly, by the state of ecclesiastical affairs among the Jews; it was when "*Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests.*" It must be well known that, according to the divine law, there was to be only one high priest at a time, namely, the eldest son of Aaron's family, who was to continue in office during life. He only was permitted to perform some of the most sacred rites, especially to go into the most holy place annually to make typical atonement for the sins of the people, on the great day of expiation. So we should ever remember that we have only one High Priest, Jesus Christ the righteous. He only has atoned for sin, and through his work and merit alone we should look for forgiveness. Let us place no confidence in any other satisfaction, or any other intercession, but let us place our hearty and undivided trust in the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

Here, however, we read of two high priests. Let us compare this with the following passages, John xi. 47: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council; and one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them," and so on. Here we read of "the chief priest," and yet of one man being the chief priest; for chief priest and high priest are only varied renderings of the same word. John xviii. 13: "They led Jesus away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year." In Acts iv. 6, however, Annas is called the high priest: "And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem." We can hardly suppose that these two were, properly speaking, high priests at the same time. Different explanations have been given of this clause, and it is difficult to say which of them is entitled to be adopted in preference to the rest. Some * think that Caiaphas was the high priest, properly so called, and Annas his deputy and the next in dignity to him. Others think that the one presided in religious ceremonies, and the other in the Sanhedrim. It has been observed, that even in the Old Testament, the principal priests or heads of the subdivisions of Aaron's family were sometimes called, in an inferior sense, chief priests, or the chief of the priests.† This, however, would not explain the clause before us, because in this sense there must have been more than two chief priests. The solution of this difficulty is probably to be found in the consideration, that by this period of the Jewish history affairs were in great confusion. Domestic broils and foreign influence often introduced individuals into the pontificate altogether contrary to the

* Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebr. et Talm.* Annas being named first because he was his father-in-law.

† Ezra viii. 24, x. 5.

scriptural rule of succession. The office had become an object of keen contention. Those who held it were often deposed, or suffered to continue only for a year, or other short time. Though, according to Josephus, there were only forty-six high priests from the time of Aaron to the time of Antiochus, a period of between fourteen hundred and fifteen hundred years, there were no fewer than twenty-eight during the short period between the commencement of the reign of Herod the Great and the destruction of Jerusalem. Whatever person, then, had once held the office (as is usual in similar cases), especially if he retired with honour, might still have retained the name; and even, though contrary to divine law, have still occasionally officiated. Annas was probably the high priest first, and Caiaphas some time after. It is plain that Caiaphas was the proper high priest that same year in which Christ was crucified, as he appears to have been when the word of the Lord came to John. And yet it would seem, from the passage quoted from the Acts of the Apostles, that Annas again became the acting high priest.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and when these persons were presiding in these provinces in civil and ecclesiastical affairs, "*the word of the Lord came to John the Baptist in the wilderness.*" In the end of the first chapter we were told, that the child John "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." By the deserts or wilderness, we are here to understand places not absolutely barren and uninhabited, but comparatively so. Then and there "the word of the Lord came unto him." This expression is the same with that often applied to the prophets in the Old Testament, and signifies that John was miraculously inspired to deliver a message to the people.

In consequence of this divine impulse, he left the more quiet and less populous parts, "*and came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*" Matthew states the substance of John's preaching to have been, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven, or the gospel dispensation, was just about to be established. In this prospect, he called on them to repent; and he required them to submit to his baptism as a sign and pledge of their renouncing sin, and of their standing prepared to welcome Messiah when he should appear. It is not to be thought that John represented repentance as sufficient, or as in any degree the procuring cause of pardon; on the contrary, a reference to the Saviour pervaded the whole spirit of his baptism, and the whole strain of his preaching. He all along taught that a mightier than himself was coming after him: and when he actually saw Christ, he said in plain terms: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

* John i. 29, iii. 36.

Still, the doctrine of repentance was most largely insisted on by John. He preached the law, to alarm men and make them flee to the gospel. He laboured to produce a conviction of sin, that men might see their need of a Saviour. Under such preaching, there can be no doubt that many did believe in Christ according to the measure of their light. John's baptism was different from Christian baptism, which was not instituted till after our Lord's resurrection. The baptizing mentioned, John iv. 1, 2, seems to have been gone about by the disciples in imitation of John, and with a reference to the more full manifestation of the Messiah. John's ministry was a kind of intermediate step between the Old and New Testament dispensations.

In this Luke teaches that John fulfilled what was "*written in the*" 40th chapter of the "*book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.*" We had an opportunity formerly of remarking that this description of the Baptist's office, as the forerunner of Christ, is an allusion to the custom of kings and generals sending pioneers on in front, to clear the way. Josephus says, that when Titus advanced to war, "there went before him the royal men, and everything auxiliary, and those who cleared the way." And in reference to the restoration of Israel, it is said, in the apocryphal book of Baruch: "God hath appointed that every high hill, and banks of long continuance, should be cast down, and valleys filled up, to make even the ground, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God." So, by the divine blessing on John's preaching, obstacles were removed, expectation was excited, many were prepared to receive the gospel, and a way was made for the victorious march of the Son of God.

Thus eventually it should be, as stated in the 6th verse, that "*all flesh,*" Gentiles as well as Jews, "*should see the salvation of God.*" These words are quoted from the same 40th chapter, and nearly as in the 52d chapter of Isaiah, in which the prophet thus further speaks of the spread of the gospel and of Messiah's glory: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!—Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high."

That this preparatory message might attract the more general notice, and be received with the higher regard, God sent it by a man of remarkable habits, especially in respect of temperance, and even of austerity of life. Matthew tells us that the same John had his raiment of camels' hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins. His garment was little better than sackcloth, and it was bound with a belt of the plainest kind. His food was locusts, which the law allowed to be eaten;* and wild honey, found in those countries in hollow trees, or in clefts of rocks.

* Lev. xi. 21, 22.

Great multitudes from Jerusalem and Judea, and the regions round about Jordan, thronged to hear him; and many were deeply impressed, and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins.

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" From the parallel passage in Matthew (iii. 7), it appears that it was especially the presence of many of the Pharisees and Sadducees which led John to utter this sharp language. The Pharisees, holding in many things the more correct opinions, making great profession, and being very strict in ceremonials, were too generally characterized by formality and hypocrisy. The Sadducees, again, were not only lax in practice, but most erroneous in doctrine, denying the existence of spirits and a future state. When John thought of the character of these, and of many others in the multitude, he exclaimed: "O generations, or broods, of vipers." The baseness of such characters extorted even sharper language than this from Jesus Christ himself: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" As if John had said; "Ye crafty, malignant, and profane creatures, who or what hath induced you to take this step? How have you been so alarmed as to flee thus far in order to avoid the coming wrath? What has moved you to put on all this appearance of repentance and humility? What has now alarmed you, Pharisees, who thought yourselves secure in your own righteousness? And what has filled you, Sadducees, with concern about futurity, who have been accustomed to speak of it as a dream? Can all this be real? Some of you may be in earnest; but it is to be feared many of you are altogether influenced by sinful or inadequate motives in coming out, and that others will soon show that their impressions are transient and vain." In order to prove the sincerity of their profession, and the worthiness of their motives for attendance, he said to them,

"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance." The fruits worthy of repentance are the renunciation of formerly indulged sins, and the performance of formerly neglected duties. We ourselves would not give credit to a man who said he was sorry for having offended us, but who still went on in repeating the same offence: as little need we suppose we are penitents if we persevere in our disobedience to God. Repentance begins, and chiefly consists in, a change of mind: but that change must evidence itself, and if it be real it will evidence itself in outward reformation and in an exemplary life. John called on his hearers to let it be seen, by their subsequent conduct, that they were converts indeed. He then adds,

"And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." The Jews were very ready to boast of their descent from Abraham, and, which was similar, of their privileges as

members of the Church and professors of the law: and they boasted, too, in such a way as to show that they were thus inspired with confidence when they were destitute of all true piety,* of all resemblance to Abraham, and of all submission to the true spirit of the legal dispensation—a delusion which Christ was careful to expose. Thus we find in the 8th chapter of John, from the 33d verse, that when Jesus was showing the Jews that the truth would make them free, “They answered him, We are Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” and they said unto him again: “Abraham is our Father.” Jesus acknowledged that they were Abraham’s seed in the sense of natural descent; but denied they were so in respect of any resemblance to his faith and piety. “If,” said he, “ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.—If God were your Father, ye would love me.—Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.” They boasted, too, that they were Moses’ disciples, though (as our Lord told them) if they had believed Moses, they would have believed in him. So, the Baptist warns them against all such false confidence in their natural descent and outward privileges, saying unto them: “*God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,*” and thereby intimating that they must not think that God would want a people, though they should be rejected; for rather than that should happen, God would create them as it were out of the very stones, would work miracles to produce them, and particularly, that he was to raise up from among the despised Gentiles many who would, in the noblest sense of the term, be children of Abraham, because they would be heirs of his faith, and partakers of the blessings of the promises.

To all this the Baptist added these awakening words; “*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*” Suppose a husbandman with an axe in his hand, surveying the trees in his garden, in order to rid it of those which are barren, and placing the axe to the root of one, while he is ready to raise his hand to cut it down, and determined, too, to do the same to every fruitless tree he has:—this is the simile here employed by John. The Jews are the trees in the vineyard of the Church. God, the husbandman, had long waited to see whether they would be productive. Now, however, a time of decision was come: the reception they were to give to the ministry of John and of Christ was to determine the point; and those of them who continued unbelieving and impenitent, were certainly and quickly to be cut down by the axe of death, and cast into the fire of hell.

* “*Stemmata quid faciunt,——
Si coram Lepidis male vivitur?
Miserum est aliorum incumbere famæ.*”
Juvenal, Sat. viii.

“And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?” A distinction seems here intended between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the people. This is corroborated by what is said in the 7th chapter of Luke, from the 29th verse: “All the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees,” and likely the Sadducees also, “and lawyers, rejected the counsel of God, against themselves, being not baptized of him.” Most of those who belonged to these sects, expecting to be treated with greater respect, were offended by John’s plain and faithful dealing, and left him. But many of the other classes, and especially of the common people, deeply affected by what he had said, earnestly inquired what they should do, how they should act, in order to show that their profession of repentance and of an expectation of a coming Messiah, was sincere, and thus escape the tremendous wrath of which the prophet had been speaking.

“He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” In cases of great necessity, strong precepts like this ought sometimes to be complied with literally. And in general, the spirit of them certainly requires a high degree of self-denial and generosity. All are called on, though their situation in life may be humble, to attend to the necessities of others according to their ability; and in all, this is an indispensable proof of the sincerity of piety and of repentance. They must break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Besides the direction given to the whole people, John gave particular directions to the different classes who consulted him.

“Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?” The word “publican” signifies a tax-gatherer, or collector of public customs. In itself the office is lawful, and indeed necessary, and therefore honourable. Various circumstances, however, contributed at that time to render it odious, and to lower the character of those who held it. They were appointed directly by the Roman government, or at least with its consent. The tribute was, in part at least, collected for Cesar, which was a badge of Jewish degradation. It was usual, too, to farm the taxes, which was a temptation to make the most of them. And many of the publicans were in fact guilty of great extortion. When, therefore, some publicans, offering themselves as candidates for baptism, asked John what they should do, he fixed on a peculiarly appropriate test of their sincerity, by saying to them: *“Exact no more than that which is appointed you.”* He did not require them to quit the employment, but he required them to be just and conscientious in it. He laid down a rule, too, which should be attended to by all who hold offices in any respect similar to theirs. Tax-gatherers must not go beyond what is enacted. At the same time, we ought to

recollect that while they ought not to exact more than what is appointed, they are bound, when they are collecting for the public good, impartially, conscientiously, and according, not indeed to a strained, but to a fair and rational interpretation of the law, to exact what is appointed: and what is thus legally exacted, we ought to pay readily, and from a principle of conscience.

When, last of all, some "*soldiers*" asked of him what they should do, John said to them: "*Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.*" The common argument founded on this for the lawfulness of the military profession, seems unanswerable. It is true that war is contrary to the mild spirit of Christianity, and that the guilt of it must be always chargeable, at least on one side. But there are several professions for which there would be no use, were it not for human depravity and injustice; for instance, there would be no use for magistrates or for civil or criminal law at all, were it not for the lawless and disobedient. So, though it is often a delicate point to settle when war becomes just and necessary, its justice and necessity in some cases are beyond dispute, and therefore, the employment of the soldier must, generally speaking, be a lawful one. But to look no farther than to the authority before us, when soldiers, under concern about salvation and the path of duty, applied to John for direction, would that intrepid teacher have hesitated a moment, if their profession had been unlawful, to tell them so, and to exhort them to quit it immediately, whatever might have been the consequence? Instead of this, however, he tells them how to conduct themselves in it. "*Do violence,*" said he, "*to no man;*"—do not shake, or concuss, or terrify, or oppress any one. "*Neither accuse any falsely;**"—do not give false information against any, of being enemies to the government, that you may profit by it. "*And be content with your wages;*"—rest satisfied with your money and victuals and other allowances, and use no improper means of obtaining more, such as oppression or mutiny. Experience has proved that soldiers, especially when quartered in foreign and conquered countries, have been too liable to fall into such crimes; and therefore this advice of John was very appropriate and very faithful.

Notwithstanding the too general prevalence of impiety and immorality in the military life, there are many honourable exceptions. We read† of the believing and humble centurion of Capernaum, who said that he was not worthy that Christ should come under his roof, and that if he would but speak the word his servant should be healed; which led our Lord to declare, that he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. We read, too, of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band, a devout man, who feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always, and to whom Peter was sent, more fully to instruct him. There is something peculiarly inte-

* *καὶ κατηγορεῖσθαι*.

† Matt. viii. 5; Acts x.

resting in almost every case in which genuine religion decidedly influences the mind and the conduct of a soldier. Those principles must be sincere, and of considerable strength, which enable him to overcome the varied temptations with which he is beset. The trials of his physical and mental courage have been severe, and his opportunities of observation have been extensive. The result of all this is the obvious, and, in the eye of the enlightened Christian, the very adorning and engaging, union of frankness with caution, of complaisance with faithfulness, of meekness with manliness, and of the knowledge of the world, from which, however, he is separated, with the knowledge of God, in which he continues to grow, and under the influence and in the comfort of which he is prepared, if it be the will of God, to live, and equally prepared, if it be the will of God, to die. Let no soldier be so infatuated as to imagine that his profession will be sustained as a satisfactory excuse for his impiety, when he comes to stand before the judgment-seat of God: for whatever be the difficulties in his way, he is offered divine aid in proportion to these difficulties, if he apply for it. Let no soldier imagine that because he is a soldier, irreligion, or profane swearing, or violence, or intemperance, or licentiousness in him, can possibly be passed over, unless he exercise repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ—unless he be actually reformed and converted. On the other hand, let no soldier who is in earnest about his salvation be discouraged. Let him be prepared to set at nought the profane and unhandsome sneers with which he may expect to meet. Let him study at once to live like a Christian, and to be exemplary in the duties of his own profession; and then even those who affect to despise will inwardly respect him, and notwithstanding their pompous strut, will, even in their own estimation, and in the award of their own consciences, sink into the dimensions of little men before him. Let him be encouraged to hold fast the profession of his faith without wavering, and to continue the devotedness of his service without reservation. In a word, let him continue to fight the good fight of faith, for thus shall he, for his prize, lay hold on eternal life.

In addition to the remarks already made on the particular description of the state of the world in the beginning of this chapter, as corroborative of the general truth of the Gospel history, let us now further observe, that that description shows that *the time fixed on in Old Testament prophecy for the appearance of Messiah had fully arrived*. "The sceptre," said Jacob, "shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver descended from him, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." The ancient Jews all explained this prophecy as the Christians now do. The various changes and reverses in Jewish affairs had been for a considerable time weakening the influence of the Jews in their own country, till, as we have here read, the Roman emperor managed every thing with his nod,

and their dismembered country was governed by deputies of his appointment. The fulness of time, then, was come, and there not having been another who could put in a shadow of claim to the title, we must conclude that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world; and having come to that conclusion, let it be our care actually to trust in him as our Redeemer, and to obey him as our Lord.

It only remains that we should call on you to improve the account here given of the Baptist's faithful ministry, which is recorded for your benefit, on whom the ends of the world are come. You are come out, as it were, to hear the preaching of John this day. Hear him, then, now putting to you the question: "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Who hath prevailed on you to come hither? Is this of God? or is it of yourselves—of your own curiosity? or is it the persuasion of others with which you have unwillingly complied? It may be that some of you are altogether insensible of your being exposed to divine wrath, and therefore only making a pretence of fleeing from it; but rest assured that wrath must come upon you to the uttermost, unless you flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel. It is well, however, if you are really convinced of your danger, for of you there is already hope.

All men need to have the way of the Lord prepared. Not that any virtuous qualifications are necessary to entitle or enable the sinner to come to Christ; but in order to this, certain views are absolutely necessary in the nature of things. There must be a knowledge of sin and of the Saviour; and there must be some sincere concern in the soul. This preparation all ought to seek, recollecting that it is God only who can give it. Prepare ye, then, the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. Let the mountains of pride be levelled, and the valleys of despondency be filled up, that the glory and salvation of the Lord may be seen.

Let the words of John to the Jews teach you to *beware of trusting in the privileges of your birth and church membership, to the neglect of real faith and piety.* You look on their blindness as great in boasting of Abraham as their father, when they bore to him not one feature of spiritual resemblance; and you will all be astonished at the saying in the Jewish Talmud: "Abraham sits next the gates of hell, and does not allow any wicked Israelite to go down into it:" but beware of all similar errors, any one of which, though better varnished over, may prove equally fatal to you. Say not within yourselves that you were born Christians, or that baptism necessarily made you Christians, or that you will be safe because your parents were in high favour with God, or because you yourselves were well educated, or are in full communion with the visible Church. "Many shall come from the east and west," from the most remote corners, and from the most unpromising situations, "and shall sit down with Abraham,

and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven ; when the children of the kingdom shall be cast out"—“ They are not all Israel who are of Israel.” He is not a Jew, he is not a Christian, who is one outwardly ; but true religion is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Finally, we have here *several marks of true repentance, and indeed of all real concern about salvation.* We have noticed that repentance implies a change of mind, and also an improvement of conduct. Before there can be good fruit, men must be grafted into a good stock. But they must still be careful to bring forth fruit to God. One of these fruits of repentance is charity. “ Is not this the fast that God hath chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him ? and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? ” John’s admonitions to the publicans and soldiers, again, teach that repentance is ever accompanied with justice and moderation. The dishonest ceases from his deceit, and the oppressor from his violence ; ill-gotten gain is restored, and injuries are, as far as possible, repaired. In short, the effect appears, according to the various occupations and habits of the penitents, in their ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well.

See, then, that actual reformation be the immediate effect of the ministry of the word on you. If you cannot reach at once to a high degree of spirituality, comply with what conscience in the meantime dictates. This will not, indeed, constitute a ground of hope, or a justifying righteousness for you. The Baptist did not teach so, and surely none who attend to the full light shed on the gospel scheme by Christ and his apostles, will ever teach so. But this is essential to any thing like sincerity and earnestness. The whole truth, in relation both to justification and sanctification, should be kept before the mind, and the hearer should follow out all that he can. If a hearer is at all in earnest, and getting any benefit whatever, there will be at least an immediate attention to what is wrong, or deficient, in his outward conduct. This is not, indeed, enough ; but this is essential, and this is promising. “ If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Such convictions and reformations, not rested in, but followed out, will, under the influence of that Spirit whose office it is to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, lead to results safe in point of trust, and exemplary in point of practice. Thus the law will be men’s schoolmaster to lead them to Christ ; and Christ will be their Redeemer and their Teacher, to deliver them from the curse, and to lead them back to the observance of the law.

LECTURE XIII.

LUKE III. 15-20.

“And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; 16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. 18. And many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people. 19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.”

IN our last lecture, we had occasion to consider the date of the commencement of that public ministry by which John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Christ, together with John's baptism, the leading general subject of his preaching, repentance, and the particular advices he gave to the different classes of persons who consulted him. So high was the character of John sustained, so deep and extensive was the sensation he had produced; and so great was the number of those who were flocking to his preaching and baptism, that many of the people who were looking for the appearance of the Messiah about that time, were, as it is here expressed, “*in expectation*,” or in suspense, and were “*musings*,” or rather reasoning, “*in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not*.” Being in this suspense, and thus reasoning within themselves, it would seem the people put the question to him expressly, whether he was the Messiah or not. To this question John always replied with sufficient plainness in the negative, and sometimes in the most brief and positive manner. John i. 19. “This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed I am not the Christ.” And in John iii. 28, we read of the Baptist saying to the Jews: “Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ.” In the passage under consideration, his answer, though not abrupt or short, is equally explicit, and very full of instruction.

“*John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*” Taking the general idea first, John declares that Christ, who was just coming forward, was mightier than he; so much so indeed, that he was not worthy to perform the most menial office to him, such as loosing or tying the latchet of his

shoes, or bearing his sandals after him, as servants in those countries were accustomed to do. There were many respects in which Christ was superior to John. He was superior to him in the dignity of his nature, being not only sinless as to his human nature, but being the only begotten Son of God, Immanuel, God with us, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, and existing from all eternity; whereas John was a frail and sinful creature, who had no existence till he came into the world. When the word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me." Christ was superior to John in point of office, appearing in the character of Messiah, Master and Redeemer; whereas John appeared in the character of a forerunner, servant, and believing disciple. Christ was mightier than John in respect of miracles, performing a great variety of the most astonishing works; whereas "John did no miracle."* And Christ was mightier than John in respect of his baptism. "John indeed baptized with water," but that was all he could do. He had not the power himself to confer the gifts of the Spirit. But Jesus Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Though the expression be, "with the Holy Ghost, *and* with fire," this does not mean two distinct things, but merely the descent of the Holy Spirit, emblematically represented by fire, and in some extraordinary cases actually accompanied with the appearance of fire. The most usual emblem of the Spirit is water; and according to this emblem it is that we read of the pouring out of the Spirit, and of the being baptized with the Spirit. The emblem of fire, however, is sometimes used as here. This received a very striking fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, on which the Spirit was given in an extraordinary degree, and in a miraculous manner: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the place where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was in fulfilment of what our Lord too foretold, as we read in Acts i. 5: "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." This description of Christ's baptizing is not, however, to be explained exclusively in reference to the day of Pentecost, and the miraculous gifts. There were comparatively but few believers who had these gifts; whereas John is speaking, in general terms, of a blessing which was to extend to all believers; and therefore the ordinary

* John x. 41.

enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are also here included. These are well represented by fire, which gives light—for believers' minds are illuminated with the saving knowledge of divine truth; by fire, which kindles and produces warmth—for the holy flame of love and zeal is excited in their hearts; by fire, which consumes the dross—for their souls are refined and purified from corruption. In reference to the overpowering efficacy of the truth sent home by the Holy Spirit to the conscience, Jeremiah has these words: "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* Isaiah says, that in the gospel day the Lord "shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning."† And Malachi asks, "Who shall abide the day of his"—that is, of Christ's—"coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

In a somewhat similar strain, John continues to say of Christ: "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.*" Scripture abounds with comparisons drawn from the various occupations of the husbandman—such, for example, as threshing and winnowing. Thus: "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor;"‡ and, "I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land."|| The visible Church may be considered as Christ's floor meant in this passage. On this floor, or in the visible Church, there is a mixture of wheat and chaff—of really believing and holy people, with hypocrites and ungodly persons. A separation, however, will be made between them. For this purpose, Christ is figuratively represented as having a fan, or instrument for winnowing, in his hand. This implies his omniscience, particularly his knowledge to discriminate character, and his omnipotence to put his will into execution. He distinguishes and separates characters by the doctrines of his Word, by the dispensations of his providence, and by the convictions of his Spirit. By these means, a considerable distinction and discovery of character is made, even in the present world. It is, however, at the general judgment that the discovery and separation will be complete. According to another comparison, Christ will then separate men one from another, "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Or, according to a comparison very similar to that before us, though the wheat and the tares should both grow together until the harvest, in the time of harvest he will say to the reapers: "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in

* Jer. xxiii. 29.

† Isa. iv.

‡ Isa. xxi. 10.

|| Jer. xv. 7.

bundles to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn." * The garner, or granary, into which the righteous are gathered, is heaven. The fire with which the chaff shall be burned, though it may in part refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, refers chiefly to hell, which is here declared to be unquenchable, or everlasting. This is foretold by Malachi in these words : " Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked ; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." † In this respect, too, Christ was superior to John. John could only discriminate by his preaching ; but Christ had a fan to make the actual separation. John could only say who should be saved ; but Christ could actually save them and gather them into his garner. " John could only threaten hypocrites, and declare that the barren trees should be cut down and cast into the fire ; but Christ could execute that threatening, and burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable." ‡

Such is a brief account of the Baptist's ministry. But Luke adds, in the 18th verse : "*Many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people.*" The word rendered "preached," signifies to preach the gospel, or to publish good tidings ; for, along with his awakening exhortations to repentance, John was an evangelical preacher, as his testimony to the "Lamb of God," the "Son of God," the "Bridegroom," the "baptism with the Holy Ghost," and the way of salvation by faith, abundantly shows. What is related of John's ministry, however, we are here taught to consider only as a specimen of it. He was copious and varied, employing every argument, and embracing every opportunity, to lead men to a sense of sin, and to prepare them to receive the Saviour.

While John was thus proceeding indefatigably in the work assigned him, his public ministry was silenced. Verses 19, 20 : "*But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet || this above all, that he shut up John in prison.*" All history, sacred and profane, combines to determine that this Herod Antipas was a man notorious for cruelty and vice. His conduct however, to the Baptist was "above all," for it was more immediately directed against God and religion, and was peculiarly an offence against the light of his own mind, and the strugglings of his own conscience. As the account here given of this affair by Luke is very general, and as he does not afterwards resume the subject, we shall take the circumstantial detail given by Mark in his 6th chapter, from the 14th verse.

* Matt. xiii. 30.

† Mal. iii. 18.

‡ Henry.

|| προσέθηκε, scelera scelero auxit. τούτων δ' ἕξης τό συνίχης ἐξαιρεγάζοντο, καὶ προσετίθει, ποιεῖντις ἀναπολογητοὶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.—Polybius.

“And king Herod heard of Jesus (for his name was spread abroad), and he said that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.” See here the power of conscience, which, not contented with correct and well-founded views of the enormity of its guilt and the greatness of its danger, conjures up imaginary terrors, and fills the mind with spectres of its own creation. Various opinions were expressed of Jesus: some said: “It is Elias; and others said, that it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.” But as for Herod, who, wherever he went, and whatever he was doing, and whether he waked or slept, appears to have been haunted with the idea of the Baptist’s severed head and mutilated body, when Herod heard of Christ, the appalling phantom rushed on his terrified imagination, and he exclaimed: “It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead.” “For,” says Mark, “Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her.” No doubt, Herod would allege very different reasons for the imprisonment of John—such as, that his being allowed to remain at large would be dangerous to the state: but the true reason was his faithfulness in reproving Herod, as “for all the evils which he had done,” so especially for the criminal marriage here described. Herod Antipas and Philip were, as formerly stated, the sons of Herod the Great, though not sons of the same mother. Much light is thrown on their history by Josephus, the general correctness of whose relation there seems no reason to doubt. Philip married Herodias, the daughter of Aristobulus, and grand-daughter of Herod the Great. By her he had a daughter, who afterwards occupies so notorious a place in this history, and whose name was Salome. Herod Antipas, in defiance of all law, human and divine, resolving to live with Herodias, whose consent to marry him (if marriage it could be called) he had obtained, put away his own wife; or rather, his own wife, understanding what was going on, and afraid for her safety, fled to her father Aretas, king of Petra, or Arabia Petrea. Herodias, then, accompanied by her daughter Salome, came and lived with Herod, nominally as his wife, but really in a state of adultery and incest. So fearless a reprover of sin as the Baptist could not be supposed to hold his peace when an opportunity occurred of reproving such an enormity. He had “said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”

This coming to the ears of Herodias, could not but be exceedingly offensive to one so unprincipled and abandoned. “Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not.” She wished his life to be taken, but she could not contrive the means herself, nor could she, by her direct application, prevail on Herod to order him to be put to death, “For Herod feared John;” he was not only afraid of the people, who counted John as a prophet, but he even had

a reverence for him, "knowing that he was a just man and an holy. And he observed him," he paid particular attention to him: and he contrived occasionally to hear him preach; "and when he heard him he did many things," he complied with many of his advices; "and he heard him gladly," deriving at times considerable pleasure from his ministry. It was, therefore, only by dint of pressing solicitation, or by entrapping Herod, that Herodias could expect to get her cruel design accomplished. Herod had already cast John into prison, or confined him, as it is said, in the castle of Macberus, which was situated near the Dead Sea; where he lay for upwards of a year, yet not so closely shut up but that some of his disciples found access to him. It was from this castle that he appears to have sent two of his disciples to ask of Jesus whether he was the Christ or not.

At last a favourable opportunity arrived for Herodias gratifying her malignant revenge. "And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee." Thus it has been usual for great men to celebrate their birth-day. On this occasion, Salome, "the daughter of Herodias, came in, and danced." It was an uncommon thing in these countries for females of high rank to appear at public feasts with the other sex at all, and still more uncommon for them thus to exhibit themselves as public dancers. This action, therefore, of Salome, who is said to have been remarkable for her beauty, though indecorous, according to general opinion, and demonstrative of a total want of right feeling, considering the shameful state in which her mother was living, was considered as a gratifying mark of her regard by Herod, and as an instance of great condescension by the company. So pleased was the king, that he promised, nay, swore, saying, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." Salome, wishing to make the most of this oath, went out and consulted her mother, who ought to have been her best counsellor. But how greatly are those children to be pitied, whose parents not only show them a bad example, but can give them bad advice, and urge them on to evil! To her question, What shall I ask? her mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist!" Whatever may have been the steps by which Salome was previously brought to be ready to comply with such a direction, "she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by-and-by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist." Shameless effrontery! surely the company, however gay, were struck with astonishment, and had their mirth spoiled, by such a proposal coming from such a person. As for the king, "he was exceeding sorry," grieved that the joy of his birth-day should be interrupted by such a tragedy, and grieved that he seemed to himself bound to order the death of a man with whom, though he was offended by his faithfulness and though he had cast him into prison, he was by no means

prepared to proceed to such an extremity, nay, whom he revered, and who, his conscience told him, deserved very different treatment. "Yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not reject her." It need hardly be remarked that no oath can bind a man to that which is wrong in itself, nor can anything be more plain than that such a method of preserving what he conceived his consistency and his honour in the sight of men, was a contempt of the authority of God. "Immediately the king sent an executioner," or one of his guards, and commanded John's head to be brought." Alas for that country in which the will of a tyrant is the law! The cruel order was forthwith obeyed. The guard proceeded to the prison, which, whether it was near, or whether it was at a distance, is not here said. Our feelings are spared the pain of any minute description of the circumstances of the atrocious deed. Having arrived at the prison, having entered into the dreary abode, accompanied by the jailer, having passed through the doors, which, as they opened and shut, grated harshly and heavily on their hinges, and having got at last into the Baptist's solitary cell, in what situation did the guard find the devoted victim, the holy man of God? Did he find him asleep on the floor, and awake him from the peaceful slumbers of the night? or did he find him on his knees, aware, by prophetic inspiration, of what was coming, and waiting for the summons? But enough. It mattered not. Such a man as he could never be unprepared. The deed was done: and his soul winged its flight to paradise. The executioner then brought John's head, and presented it to Salome in a charger, or large plate: and she gave it to her mother, who is said to have brutally triumphed over it, and treated it with indignity.* When his disciples, however, heard of what had been done, they went to the prison, and carried away his mutilated body, and with every mark of grief and respect, bestowed on it a decent sepulture. Such was the tragical end of that imprisonment of which Luke only states the commencement. In cases so atrocious as this, and especially in persecutors of the prophets, and distinguished servants of the Lord, his retributive judgments, in the course of his providence, have often been seen in this world; and so it was with regard to the three persons who were guilty of the Baptist's murder. Herod got involved in war with Aretas, the father of his first wife, whom he had repudiated, in which he was overthrown. Some time after, incurring the displeasure of the Roman emperor, he was stripped of his tetrarchy, and banished with Herodias into Gaul, where they lived and died in misery and contempt. Thus far is certain; and Josephus attributes their reverses to the guilt they contracted by the murder of John. With regard to Salome—the Greek historian, Nicephorus Callistus, positively affirms this extraordinary circumstance, which, whether we

* Driving a bodkin through the tongue, as Antony's wife did to Cicero. On the authority of Jerome.

credit it or not, may be mentioned, that as she was walking over deep water on ice, the ice gave way, and she fell in up to the neck; in which situation she remained, till the ice severed her head from her body. Enough, however, is certain in their history, to show the danger of gross wickedness, and especially of persecution, even in this world, and to add emphasis to the warnings of that God, who declares that he will suffer no man to do his people wrong with impunity; nay, that he will reprove kings for their sakes, saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

In the specimen of the Baptist's ministry, and the part of his history, which we have now had before us, there are various things worthy of the notice and imitation of all, and particularly of Christian ministers. Of these the most remarkable are his humility and his faithfulness.

What a beautiful pattern of humility is here set forth! John was careful not to usurp any honour which did not belong to him, and not to allow the people to be in any uncertainty as to the place which he occupied. No doubt, the expressions which he employed to describe the sense he entertained of his inferiority to the Saviour, though strong, were not beyond, nay, were not up to truth, for the distance between the Son of God and even the best and highest of his creatures is infinite; at the same time, John's lowliness is very noticeable and very instructive. And as he did not neglect to humble himself before his Master, so his Master took care to give this most honourable testimony to him: "Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." Thus; every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, while he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. John's humility appears in the moderate and just estimate he expresses of his baptism. He confessed that he baptized only with water. A higher influence might accompany his baptism, but could not be conferred by him. Now, the same principle is applicable to the ordinances administered by Christian teachers. With regard, for example, to Christian baptism, it is only water baptism that ministers can give. It is not in their power either to give or to withhold the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; nor are these influences inseparably connected with the outward ceremony. "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in the sacraments themselves, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them."* In connection with this, we should all feel reminded of the absolute necessity of the influences of the Spirit to render ordinances effectual, and to the formation of the Christian character. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Let us be thankful that, in these circumstances, our heavenly Father has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. John, moreover, mani-

* Shorter Catechism.

fested the humble spirit of holy delight in the idea of the greater glory of the Redeemer: and when he actually saw him, he expressed himself satisfied. "The friend of the bridegroom," said he, "who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease:" a beautiful example, teaching us that we should be made willing to wane away, and to go down to forgetfulness, and be comforted and refreshed, even in the prospect of death, by the assurance of the ever-increasing glory of the Redeemer's name.

There is here also placed before all, and especially before ministers, *a noble example of faithfulness*. John all along proceeded, without respect of persons, to warn every sinner to flee from the wrath to come; and he even lifted up an intrepid voice against every kind and every degree of iniquity. We formerly heard him speaking closely to the consciences of persons in the lower walks of life; and here we have seen that he hesitated not to speak the truth even to the arbitrary tetrarch in whose power he was. Admitted, it would appear, to preach before him, and called on to speak out, he did his duty, he reproved him for all his crimes, and especially for that which was the most notorious of them. The fear of the prison did not move him from his steadfastness. It is likely that some compliance and temporizing might have obtained him his liberty, and saved his life, but he remained firm; and we may be sure that he does not now regret his resolution. Thus all, and especially public instructors, are called on not to sacrifice the truth, and not to connive at any iniquity. Not that any one is called on to thrust himself into the presence of the great, or that any one is entitled to use opprobrious language; but where duty calls, we are to be faithful, whatever may be the consequences to ourselves. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart," saith the law of God; "thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

The view here given, finally, of the *character, conduct, and history of Herod Antipas, is full of matter for awful reflection, and serious admonition*.

How mysterious are the ways of Providence! That a man so worthless should be permitted to cut short the labours and the life of so holy and so useful a character, and that, too, in order to gratify the revenge of an abandoned adulteress, and to reward the vain exhibition of a giddy damsel, must, no doubt, at first appear strange. How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out! His ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. Yet the anger of God overtook the persecutors before they left this world; and as for the holy sufferer, his work was done; and it was easy for his Lord to recompense to him his temporal sorrows a hundred fold in the world of glory.

Again, *how dangerous is power without grace!* It is common to

wish for power, and to envy those in whose hands it is; but when it is held without principle, it is fraught with peril, not only to those over whom it is exercised, but to those by whom it is possessed. They are generally borne away by the temptations which it presents to the gratification of caprice, luxury, covetousness, oppression, revenge, and every evil passion; and however prosperous their career may seem for a season, their end is generally destruction, and their memory is abhorred. "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward are an abomination to the Lord.—The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the portion of fools.—Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

The way in which the Baptist addressed Herod, reminds us that there is not one rule of morality to the lowly, and another rule to the mighty, but, *what is sin in the meanest is also sin in the highest*. It would really seem as if some of the great men of the earth imagined that they were privileged to break through the common rules of religion and morality; that what would be shameful and unpardonable in persons in the lower walks of life, is justifiable and almost unavoidable in them; and that because their fellow-creatures cannot call them to account, they will never have to answer to God. Alas for those who go on in sin under any such delusion! We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against all that commit such things. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgeth them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?—He will render to every man according to his deeds.—For there is no respect of persons with God."

We have here, too, an *awful commentary on human depravity*. When we think of the character and conduct of these three notorious persons, we may see, with horror, what human nature is capable of; we may well blush for our nature, and exclaim, What is man!

This history shows *the dreadful consequences which often result from the violation of the seventh commandment*. The marriage bond once broken, hatred, revenge, and murder, and aggravated ruin, are often the direful consequences. Here, too, we have a warning of the dangers of *intemperance*. It was probably owing, in a great degree, to wine and carousing, that Herod was put so far off his guard as to make the rash oath, and was so mad as to follow it up with the bloody command. And thus it is that wine takes away the heart, and intoxication prepares the way for deeds of impiety, and cruelty, and impurity, at which even the perpetrators themselves, in their sober hours, would shudder. It was when Belshazzar was drinking wine with a thousand of his lords, that he sent for the gold and silver vessels of the temple, and profaned them: and then it was that the handwriting appeared on the wall against him; and the same night he was slain and

his city taken. Alluding to a king of Israel, Hosea says :* “ In the day of our king, the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorners.” Let such cases operate as a warning to those who are exposed to this particular temptation, lest, falling a prey to it, they be hurried on to add one kind of iniquity to another.

Again, we should learn from Herod’s history *to take reproof in good part*. Well had it been for him if he had submitted to John’s reproof; but he was obstinate and enraged, and went on to his ruin. “ He that being often reprov’d, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” Let us, then, listen to the faithful but friendly voice that would recall us from sin, and let us turn at wisdom’s reproof.

But perhaps the most generally applicable, and most awakening consideration of any, connected with Herod’s character, is, that he revered John, knowing him to be a good man, and *did many things, and heard him gladly, and yet lived and died in sin*. He appears to have sent for John, and to have listened to him with admiration; nay, he actually did many things which he enjoined. He may have become more attentive to his subjects, more kind to the poor, more observant of public worship, and more decent in many of his habits; but still he retained Herodias; still he murdered John; still he continued impenitent and unbelieving. So there are some who have no little respect for the faithful ministers of religion, who come to hear them, and sometimes hear them gladly; nay, who do many things, who renounce many evil habits, and attend to many outward commands; but still who cannot bear to have their favourite sin attacked, or, at least, who will not let it go—who are no true converts, because there is in them still some one voluntary, prevailing, and radical defect; nay, who are sorry they are guilty of some sins, but still sink deeper and deeper into them, and go on to sin against all light, and against all convictions. It is for you, my friends, to consider whether there be not some such fatal defect in some of you. It may be some remainder of unbelief, or self-righteousness, which, though it allow you to do many things, prevents you from closing with Christ; or it may be some favourite, some besetting sin, which, if only you be allowed to retain, you are willing to give up every thing else. But thus to offend in one point is to be guilty of all, is to ruin all. Resolve, therefore, by the help of God, to give up that one error, or that one sin, though the renunciation should be like the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye. In short, whether your knowledge be more or less extensive, or your convictions of the importance of salvation be more or less deep, if there be anything whatever which stands in the way of your hearty and entire surrender to the grace and government of the Redeemer, listen obediently to the warning voice which now proclaims in your ear, “ It is not lawful for thee to have it.”

* Hosea vii. 5.

LECTURE XIV.

LUKE III. 21-38.

“ Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, 22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased. 23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, 24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, 26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda, 27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, 28. Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, 30. Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naason, 33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, 35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, 36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, 37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, 38. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

THE first two verses of this passage contain an account of our Saviour's baptism by John. As, however, there is a more circumstantial narration of it given by Matthew, we shall also avail ourselves of that evangelist's description, contained in his 3d chapter, from the 13th verse: “ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now ; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water : and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him, and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Luke says that this happened “*when all the people were baptized.*” This does not mean that John did not baptize any after this time, for the reverse was plainly the fact, but that by this time many of all classes of people were baptized by him. “Then,” says Matthew, “cometh Jesus from Galilee;” or, according to Mark, “from Nazareth of Galilee.”* Though Jesus was born in Bethlehem, yet his parents, as we found in the 2d chapter of Luke, returned with him “to their own city Nazareth:” and so also, after his appearance in the temple at twelve years of age, “he went down with them, and came to Nazareth.” From what is said by Matthew and Mark, it appears that he continued to reside at Nazareth till this period, when, as is mentioned in a subsequent verse of the lecture, he was about thirty years of age. When he applied to John for baptism, John “forbade him.” We are not to consider this as a peremptory and obstinate refusal, but rather as an endeavour to dissuade him, prompted by the first suggestions of a mind in which, though there was much imperfection, there was yet much excellence. Even before the outward and miraculous sign at our Lord’s baptism, John saw by a divine suggestion, that Jesus was the Messiah; and therefore, struck with a sense of his own inferiority, he said: “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” He needed to be baptized with the Holy Ghost—needed the regenerating and sanctifying influences of divine grace; and he could not comprehend how one of Christ’s dignity and purity, who had all fulness of grace dwelling in himself, should apply to him, his servant, and his forerunner, for the baptism with water. No doubt, it would have been an evidence of more light and more faith, had John instantly acquiesced in the propriety of the application, assured that whatever Christ proposed must be right. Still, however, in this, though the Baptist cannot be altogether defended, he may, in a good degree, be excused. In the midst of his partial errors, there was much light and much humility. In the midst of some unbelief, for he could hardly believe it possible that Christ could condescend so far as thus to apply to him, there is much faith in Messiah’s dignity and grace. John seemed to think this an honour too great for him, and in one sense it certainly was so: and he expresses himself somewhat as his mother did to Christ’s mother, when she said: “Whence is this unto me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?”

The humility here displayed by John is deserving of imitation: for well may every one confess his complete unworthiness of a gracious visit from the Lord. We must beware, however, of letting our humility degenerate into despondence and distrust, for to disbelieve the fulness and freedom of the Saviour’s grace, has the same effect as if men literally forbade him to help them, and refused to receive any favour at his hand. When in course of washing the disciples’ feet, our Lord came to Peter, Peter

* Mark i. 9.

exclaimed: "Lord dost thou wash my feet! Thou shalt never wash my feet; but Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." True, we are utterly unworthy of the least favour, but then it is of grace, and not of merit, that salvation is proposed to us; and we must not, under any pretence of humility, question the readiness of the Lord to help us; for under a humble guise, this would be really that pride which refuses to be indebted to sovereign grace.

Though John would at first have declined baptizing Christ, yet our Lord insisted on his doing so. He did not dispute the truth of John's views of his greatness, and he, no doubt, gave John credit for his humility; but he adhered to his purpose, and stated the reason of it: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He says this, though not exclusively, yet chiefly, of himself. Every thing that Jesus did and suffered was becoming, suitable in itself, and worthy of his own character, and of the glory of his Father. "It became him, through whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—Such an high priest became us." Here in particular, it became him to fulfil all righteousness; that is, to comply with every religious institution. This was proper in him as the surety of sinners. He complied not only with the moral, but also with the ceremonial precepts, that he might establish a justifying righteousness both for Jews and Gentiles, who should believe in his name. And, with regard to John's baptism, in particular, though Jesus did not need the thing signified by baptism, or the washing away of sin, and though it could not be in his case strictly the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, yet, as it was at that time a duty in believers to come to John's baptism, Christ himself submitted to it, and thus fulfilled the law in every sense, that he might be the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. His compliance with this ordinance, too, was a strong practical testimony to the character of John, of whom he often spoke very highly. In this, too, he is to be considered as an example. He showed in particular, that he wished the people to come to John's baptism, and he showed in general, that he wished all pious persons to be conscientious in attending to all the ordinances of divine appointment. Though we cannot be perfect in any, we must not be partial. It is not enough to do one thing, and wilfully to leave another undone. We must "esteem all God's commandments respecting all things to be right, and hate every false way."

Though John at first hesitated, he did not obstinately hold to his opinion. He was satisfied with the reason Christ was condescending enough to explain; and he complied with his request and baptized him. From this it is justly inferred, that Christian baptism may, without any impropriety, be administered, nay, ought to be administered, to some who are not

capable of *all* the things signified by it, or connected with it. Here we see Jesus, though incapable of regeneration and repentance, because he had no sin, yet baptized for other good reasons. In like manner, though the infants of believing parents are not capable of being taught, or of believing, or of repenting, or of making a profession of Christianity, yet as they are capable of regeneration, the chief blessing signified, and as their baptism answers other important purposes, in reference to themselves, to their parents, and to the Church, it is therefore proper that they should be baptized.

This part of sacred history also teaches us that outward baptism does not supply the place of the inward baptism of the Spirit, of which latter, indeed, the former is only the symbol. John taught those whom he had baptized to look for Christ's spiritual baptism; and he even said of himself; "I have need to be baptized of thee." On the other hand, it is here equally taught, that the possession of the influences of the Holy Spirit does not supersede the duty of attending to the outward ordinance of baptism; for Jesus had these influences without measure, and yet he was baptized with water. None, therefore, are entitled to plead against the Christian sacrament of baptism, on the ground of its being useless to those who have the Spirit.

Matthew says that Jesus "went up out of the water," from which some argue in favour of complete immersion. Others, however, observe that the clause might be more exactly rendered "*from the water*;"* that is, from the brink of the river, to which he had gone down to be baptized, probably by having water poured on his head or face—for there is no mention of his undressing, or dressing, as they think there would have been had the form been that of complete immersion.

We are told by Luke that "*the heaven was opened*," or, as Matthew has it, "the heavens were opened unto him," that is, to Christ; so that to him, and for his encouragement, there appeared an obvious and unusual opening, through which was discovered the glory that was above the firmament. "And," in the language of Matthew, "he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." Christ saw this, and as the evangelist John tells us, the Baptist saw it also, as the appointed sign by which he was to know the Messiah. Luke says: "*The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*." It has been disputed, whether any thing more be meant by this than a reference to the manner of the descent of a dove, or other bird. One thing is certain, that there was some visible appearance, some bodily shape, and this being certain, there cannot be any difficulty in believing that the common idea is the correct one, that there was the appearance of a dove, not probably, however, a real dove, but a certain celestial light, or flame, in the shape of a dove; somewhat like this, probably, though different, was the appearance on the day of pentecost,

* ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος.

when there appeared unto the disciples "cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." And if there was to be any bodily appearance at all, a more suitable one than that of a dove cannot be conceived. Thus doves are seen to descend and light on the earth. Men seem to have agreed to consider the dove as a favourite bird, and as the emblem of innocence and peace. It was the dove that returned into the ark with the olive branch. "Be ye harmless as doves," says the apostle. Hence the dove was a fit emblem both of the peaceable fruits of the Spirit, and of the innocence and gentleness of Christ.* This appearance showed that the influences of the Holy Spirit were given to Christ in all their variety and in abundance, nay, without measure. "The Spirit of the Lord God rested upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might." It is true that Christ, as being a holy and divine person, needed not these influences for his own sake. But as he came to act the part of a prophet and mediator, it was proper that he should come by obvious divine appointment, and with special qualifications. Besides, these gifts were treasured up in him, to be communicated to his people. "Thus it hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," in order that his people may receive out of his fulness grace upon grace.

But there was also another striking miracle which followed our Lord's baptism. "*A voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*" As the Holy Spirit manifested himself in the likeness of a dove, so the Father manifested himself by a voice. We observe, in what was then spoken, the relation in which Christ stands to God: he is his Son. He is his Son, first, in respect of his eternal generation. He is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." He is his Son, secondly, in respect of his miraculous conception, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is his Son, again, by particular designation, to hold the office of mediator, and to be the heir and Lord of all things, whom the Father hath sanctified and sealed, and to whom he said: "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." And he is his Son, or proved to be so, in respect of his resurrection, being "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." He is also here proclaimed to be God's *beloved* Son. He is elsewhere called God's "dear Son," the Son of his love; and, in addressing himself to his Father, he said: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." In his beloved Son, the Father here declared that he is well pleased. This is to be viewed in reference both to Christ himself, and to his people. In reference to Christ, the Father is well pleased with what the Son is in him-

* The ancient Jews considered the dove as the emblem of the Holy Ghost, the "voice of the turtle" being interpreted, in the Chaldee paraphrase, as signifying "the voice of the Spirit."

self as a divine person, and as the glorious Mediator—with all, in short, that he is, and all that he does. “Behold,” saith the Father by Isaiah, “my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” But this is also to be viewed in reference to his people, and implies that God is well pleased with them in him, or for his sake. He has much reason to be displeased with those who are in their natural state of sin and condemnation—he is angry with such every day; but he is well pleased with those who are in Christ by faith. In the language of the evangelical prophet: “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. Let us all pay particular attention to this point, which indeed constitutes the very essence of the gospel. Do we desire that God should look on us with approbation—and what can be more desirable? Let us be thoroughly persuaded that the only way this can be, is by our submission to the righteousness which is by faith in Christ Jesus. Let us remember that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that they who are in the flesh cannot please him: and let us say, from the very bottom of our heart: “Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.” May we be “accepted in the Beloved:” and may “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.”

Luke mentions an instructive circumstance, which is not noticed by the other evangelists, that the heaven was opened, the visible descent of the Holy Spirit took place, and the voice was heard, *while Jesus was “praying.”* Though a common, it is an important observation, that all the three voices by which the Father bore witness from heaven to his Son, were heard while he was praying, or immediately after. Thus, it was as he prayed on the mount, that he was transfigured; and it was just after this that a bright cloud overshadowed the company, “and there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him.”* Thus, also, in John xii. 27, we read: Jesus said, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” And so it was, as already remarked, in the case under consideration. Now, there is here example and encouragement in regard to the duty of prayer. It was when Jesus was praying that the heavens were opened; and prayer is still a heaven-opening exercise. “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” We are here reminded, too, that baptism should be accompanied with prayer, that the inward and spiritual grace may accompany

* Luke ix. 29.

the outward and visible sign. We are here reminded to look for every token of the divine favour, both temporal and spiritual, and especially for the influences of the Holy Spirit, in the way of answer to prayer. God will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Let us, therefore, be encouraged to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," and "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God."

The only other observation we shall make on this account of our Lord's baptism is, that it furnishes *a clear and sensible demonstration of the doctrine of the Trinity*. All the three persons are represented as present and engaged, on this important occasion. The Holy Ghost is seen descending in a visible form; God the Father speaks with his own voice; and the Son is the person baptized, endued with the Spirit's influences, and borne witness to from on high. Thus the baptism of Christ corresponded strikingly with the perfect form of Christian baptism which he afterwards instituted, commanding it to be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" thus the sublime doctrine of the Trinity is taught, not in an abstract, or dogmatical, or speculative way, but, in as far as is possible, in an intelligible and practical form, being exhibited as involving a view of the offices performed by these divine persons in the plan of salvation. And thus we are admonished and encouraged to seek access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father, and to pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, may be with us.

But let us proceed to the consideration of what is stated in the 23d verse: "*And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.*" A difference of opinion exists among the ablest expositors as to the age Christ had reached at his death. The probable extremes are from thirty-two to thirty-five years. Some have thought that he lived to a much greater age, but the reasons which they offer in support of their opinion are not of weight. It is proper here to notice the words of the Jews to our Lord, recorded in John viii. 57: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Irenæus, who suffered martyrdom in the year of our Lord 203, in his work *Against Heretics*, part of which is still extant, endeavours, from this passage in John, to support the opinion that Christ lived to be fifty years of age. Such an opinion, however, seems quite inconsistent with the general bearing of the sacred history; nor has it any solid foundation in this passage. The Jews, doubtless, spoke in some degree at random, or by conjecture: being to mention some age, they fixed on one which they were sure was beyond what he had reached. It is probable enough, too, that the gravity and seriousness of the Redeemer's aspect, and the hardships and griefs which he had undergone, made him look considerably older than he really was. But at whatever time his ministry

terminated, we are sure, on the authority of the passage before us, that he was about thirty years of age when it began. This was the age originally appointed by the law of Moses for the priests entering on the *full* exercise of their office.* That Christ, with all his divine and human qualifications, did not come forward earlier, may be considered, though not as fixing any particular age, yet as teaching that men should not prematurely thrust themselves forward into public offices, especially into the ministry: and that he did then come forward may be considered as teaching men not to make any unnecessary delay, but to give to God the vigour of their days.†

“Jesus,” says Luke, “began to be about thirty years of age, *being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.*” Jesus Christ had really no human father; but being born of Mary, who was espoused, or engaged in marriage, to Joseph, and being adopted by Joseph, he was the supposed, or reputed son, nay, he was the legal son of Joseph.‡ Then follows a genealogy to the end of the chapter.

You will be quite aware that there are two genealogies given of our Lord—this one by Luke, and the other by Matthew in the first chapter. You will also, most of you, be aware that there are many considerable difficulties in reconciling these genealogies with each other, and with the Old Testament history and genealogies. Though these difficulties have been well surmounted by various writers, yet it would be tedious and unedifying to enter very particularly into them here. A knowledge of this subject is best acquired, not from public oral discourses, but from private reading; and those who wish to enter minutely into it, had better consult the commentators and other authors who treat of it. We may, however, here mark the chief outlines, and notice a few other particulars which may throw light on the whole.

The genealogy given by Matthew is brought down from Abraham to Christ; whereas the genealogy given by Luke is carried up from Christ all the way to Adam. The genealogy in Matthew is the genealogy through Joseph, the supposed and legal father of Christ; whereas the genealogy in Luke is Christ’s genealogy through Mary his mother. In this genealogy before us, however, you will observe that though it is properly through Mary, the name of Mary is not introduced, but it is said that Jesus was the supposed son, or was reckoned the son of Joseph: and this mode is followed in conformity with the usual practice of the Jews, which was to reckon genealogies, by naming, not the females, but the males. The father is here put, then, in

* Numb. iv. 2, 3. Some easier duty was appointed earlier, Numb. viii. 24; 1 Chron. xxiii. 24.

† Doddridge.

‡ Some think that the meaning of *ὡς ἠνομίστατο* may be, “as was reckoned in the legal records,” *ut lege sancitum est*. The very same word, however, is used by Herodotus, lib. iv., for one who was only supposed the son of another, *τοῦτου πατρὶς νομίζεσθαι*, *ejus filius censetur*.

place of the mother, even though the very next step in the reckoning introduces the mother's father. It is said next, you will perceive, that Joseph was the son of Heli. But towards the end of Matthew's genealogy, it is said that Jacob begat Joseph. In fact, Jacob was literally and in the common sense of the word, the father of Joseph; and Heli was actually the father of Mary. But, as Joseph married Mary, Heli became his father-in-law, and according to a common enough use of the word, Joseph is here called the son of Heli. It is to be noticed, too, that Joseph and Mary were of the same tribe and leading family, namely, the tribe of Judah, and family of David; and this not only shows that the Saviour was in the most complete way descended as prophecy required, but to a certain extent accounts for some of the names being the same, and some of the names being different in the two genealogies.

With regard to the source from which the evangelists drew these genealogies, that source was, in all probability, the public records which were kept in the temple. The Jews were very careful to keep such accounts, as for minor reasons, so especially to preserve the law of inheritance, to keep the priesthood pure, and to ascertain the line of David, and of course of the Messiah. That they had such tables at the time of Christ, appears from various circumstances, and, in particular, from this passage in Josephus' history of his own life, in which, after having given the genealogy of his own family, he says: "I give this succession of our family as I found it written in the public tables." By adopting this method, it is obvious that the evangelists rendered it impossible for the unbelieving Jews to object anything as to Christ's descent. Besides, if this, as is most likely, was the plan they adopted, even though there were errors in the tables, they (the evangelists) were not accountable for these errors; it has not been shown, however, that they do contain any errors, nor is it to be supposed that, under the guidance, partly of providence, and partly of inspiration, any errors could have here been committed. It will serve to prevent some mistakes, and to clear up some difficulties, if it be recollected that these genealogies contain much that is not to be found in the Old Testament; that in some cases an individual is called the son of the person named immediately before, though he be properly his grandson, or great-grandson, or be removed from him by several steps; that for this reason, and other reasons, there are some omissions, which, however, are not to be considered as errors; that several different individuals bear the same name; and that Matthew draws the pedigree through Solomon, whereas Luke brings it through Nathan, and therefore leaves out the kings of Judah.

We shall here read the whole genealogy as here given by Luke. Nor will this be the reading of a dry catalogue of uninteresting names; for in many cases the very name itself will recall to the recollection of those who are familiar with the Old

Testament, many important facts in sacred history. "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat," &c.

On these verses we may remark,

1. That they *completely establish that essential point in the evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus, namely, his descent from David, Judah, and Abraham.* They trace, indeed, his pedigree all the way up to Adam, and show how Jesus must be considered as the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent. What an astonishing genealogical table this is! Where is there anything of the kind so authentic, so extensive, as this, or at all comparable to this? This is not one of the endless, the interminable, and useless genealogies which the apostle dissuades us from studying: but this serves the most important purpose of showing (which was necessary to be shown according to ancient prophecy) the true and proper lineage of Him who is the seed of Abraham, and the son of David, in whom all the hopes of fallen man are centred. How pleasing to think of the providence by which this record was preserved amid all the previous convulsions of the Jewish nation! And how noticeable and instructive the circumstance, that these public records were preserved for a sufficient length of time after the coming of Christ, for his followers to appeal to them, so that they could challenge the unconverted Jews to the inquiry, and the apostle of the Gentiles could appeal with confidence to these records, and say to the Hebrews:* "It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah!" Nor is it to be overlooked, in the argument with unbelieving Jews, that if the Messiah be not come, it would be now impossible to demonstrate his lineage, were he yet to come; because the authentic Jewish records were lost and destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and there are no authoritative records kept since that time. Let these things, then, in conjunction with the other evidences, confirm our faith in the divine mission of our Lord: and holding that general belief, let us give our careful attention and firm adherence to the exact and particular doctrines which he teaches, and show a ready obedience to the precepts which he enjoins.

2. *Among the ancestors of our Lord, there are found persons of various descriptions and characters.* Though his line frequently runs through the elder brother, it also often runs through a younger brother of the family, which shows that God follows his own sovereign will, and in the course of his providence often makes the first last and the last first, putting down the great and exalting them of low degree. In this genealogy, too, are found some who were originally Gentiles, and strangers to the covenants of promise, as Rahab and Ruth; a circumstance which gave early proof that in Jesus Christ there was to be neither Greek nor Jew, and that the blessings of his salvation were to

* Heb. vii. 14.

be proposed to every nation under heaven. Nay, in his pedigree there are found some individuals who were of abandoned character; and yet he was not thereby disgraced. This should teach us not to upbraid any with the scandals of their ancestors, which it is evident cannot be laid to their charge. It shows, too, that grace does not run in families, but is the special gift of God to individuals. This may be viewed also as an illustration of our Lord's humiliation, who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, who condescended to derive his descent even from some who were sinners above the generality, and who was in all things made like unto his brethern, except that he was himself without sin. And the honour thus put on such persons, especially when taken in connection with the certain conversion of some of them, may be considered as a proof of his ability and willingness to save even the chief of sinners who come to God through him.

Finally. *A glance at these generations which have passed away, naturally suggests a variety of reflections plaintive, humbling, and instructive.* Every individual here mentioned, together with the whole race of his contemporaries, rose, and flourished, and disappeared; and many a generation of men has been cut off since this genealogy was penned. We, too, are hastening down to the grave; and generations yet unborn must follow in the same track. We see, in all this, the sad consequences of our apostasy, by which death has been introduced into the world, and entailed on almost every descendant of Adam. What a view have we here, also, of the vanity of the world! Some few, indeed, have obtained celebrity, but how little can mere human celebrity avail them now! Of many of those who are mentioned in this list, we have nothing but their names remaining, while the names of by very far the greatest number of men have utterly perished with them. How are they to be pitied, then, who have no name but that which is written in the earth, and no portion but a portion in this life! Let it be our earnest desire to gain a more substantial honour. Happy shall we be if, though forgotten on earth, we belong to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Vanity, vanity: all beneath the sun is vanity.

Melancholy, however, as is the subject, it is not without features of a pleasing complexion. All those generations were cut down, but the generation of the Redeemer came at last. The efficacy of his blood extended back to the generations before him, it is all-powerful at this moment, and it will never lose its virtue. He is come to restore us to greater glory than the first Adam lost: and though we must die, death through him is a blessing. God and the Saviour, be it also recollected, are more honoured, and more happiness will be occasioned, by a frequent succession of believers, than if the same generation had continued for any great space of time. Frail and evanescent, too, as is man, God is ever the same; his promises are ever sure, his plans

are ever accomplishing, his people are ever dear to him. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Truly comfortable and edifying, as well as affecting, in this view, is the whole of the 90th Psalm, beginning, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations;" to which, however, we must be contented with referring you. And, my brethren, whatever be the guilt of many, and the decline of true religion in some places at certain times, it is truly refreshing to think that the providence and grace of God will so order events, that there shall, on the whole, be a progression in the improvement of our race. It is not in human arts and sciences alone that the world is improving, and will improve; those means are already in action, through the instrumentality of which each generation of men will become more advanced in Christian excellence than the preceding, till at last there shall be established over the wide world, the universal empire of truth, and of righteousness. Men, it is true, will still die, but death will convey more of them to heaven. Generations will be carried away as with a flood, but the mansions of glory will be peopling fast. And at length the last generation of men shall come forward, when the mystery shall be finished, and time shall be no more, and duration shall no longer be reckoned by years and ages, and all the troubles of this changeful life shall give place to the blessedness of an unchanging eternity. Let it be our great concern to improve our own season of grace, the merciful day of our own visitation, that after having served our own generation by the will of God, we may fall asleep.

LECTURE XV.

LUKE IV. 1-13.

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered. 3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6. And the devil said unto him; All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee: 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

It is one of the most ruinously successful artifices of the great adversary of men, to persuade them that he has no existence; for thus he throws them off their guard, and makes them believe that from him, at least, they have nothing to fear; and thus the very sentiment which would appear to them to annihilate his being, completely establishes over them the plenitude of his power. The doctrine of Scripture in reference to the fallen angels has been most usually opposed by the weapons of ridicule—a mode of attack which says little for the goodness of the cause in which it is employed; for why resort to an expedient so very low, and so far from any thing like pious, if solid argument were at command? In opposition, however, to the commonly received opinions on this subject, reason is sometimes appealed to, not only by declared infidels, but, what is far more strange, by some who assume the Christian name. But why should these opinions be reckoned improbable, or absurd? So far is the existence of beings only spiritual from being improbable, that when it is considered that the Creator himself is a pure spirit, it is in itself more probable and more easy to be supposed, that he should form creatures purely spiritual, than creatures partly spiritual and partly material. Nor is it at all improbable that angels should fall, any more than that man should have fallen. Nor, again, is it improbable that both the holy and the fallen angels should be employed, or permitted, to take some part in the affairs of men; that they do so is at least

quite capable of proof, though not an original dictate of reason. Were it in *our* power to visit distant worlds, we should, without question, occasionally do so; and we should, on these visits, not be altogether unconcerned spectators of what is going on, but should in some cases interfere, properly or improperly, according to our different views and dispositions. The same thing, then, may be considered as probable with regard to angels, both good and bad. It is to be supposed that they do thus visit us and act among us, unless, indeed, they be positively prohibited by God. Nor is there any impossibility, or improbability, in the nature of things, that spirits should communicate to us thoughts both holy and sinful. We communicate thoughts to each other, in various ways, of which, if we had not been constituted exactly as we are, it would have been impossible for us to form any conception. Hence it follows, that there may be other ways of communication still, which we cannot conceive. It will not be disputed that angels communicate their thoughts to each other, and yet we cannot comprehend how they do so; why, then, should our ignorance of the manner in which they ascertain our thoughts, and communicate thoughts to us, be viewed as a proof that no such intercourse can exist? It may, indeed, be objected, that when men hold such intercourse with men, they are conscious of the presence and actings of each other; whereas, they are not conscious, either of the presence or of the communications of good or bad spirits, and therefore ought to conclude against such presence and such communications. To this we reply, that if such consciousness be demanded, there are many well authenticated instances of it, in which men have been sensible of the presence, and words and actings of these spirits. Notice, however, to what an extreme of impiety and atheism it would lead, to say that ideas cannot be conveyed to us by any being of whose presence and acts we are not conscious: for this would exclude the great Creator himself from all access to the souls he has made. Both reason and Scripture lead us to believe that God does direct our minds, though we are not sensible of his presence and agency. Why, then, may not the same thing hold substantially with regard to the holy and the fallen angels? Thus the objection, by proving too much, proves nothing. Is there not, then, on the whole, something rational in the idea that good angels may promote man's holiness, and evil angels his disobedience? On the supposition of that agency being equal on both sides, man would be no loser. On the supposition of the favourable influence being at least more general than the unfavourable, man would be obviously a gainer. It is possible, too, that the permission of some unfavourable interference might serve important purposes to man, and be overruled for the greater glory of God. Thus the subject has a very different aspect in the eye of reason, from what some profane witlings and self-conceited objectors pretend.

Viewed, again, in the light of revelation, though many points

are left obscure, there are many points cleared up, on the subject of the fallen angels. We are told, that they were originally holy and happy in heaven, like those who are now confirmed in blessedness; that one of them of high rank, now called Satan, or the Devil, by way of horrid eminence, instigated by pride and ambition, rebelled against God, and was joined in his rebellion by a great multitude of the heavenly host; that they were banished from heaven; that no means are appointed for their recovery; that they are reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; that though they are in general confined, they, and especially their chief, are permitted, at times, to go a certain length in their endeavour to extend the dominion of sin, to which they are prompted by their malice and wickedness; that the devil was the successful tempter of our first parents; that he has been instrumental in many of the crimes and calamities of mankind; that he opposed the Son of God, and excited to his crucifixion; that he and his associates have habitually acted, as far as they could, as the deceivers and destroyers of men; that they will continue in the same desperate course, till the end of time; and that then their power will be crushed, and they will be left to lie for ever under the load of guilt and misery which they have brought upon themselves.

Such are the ideas on the subject which are plainly expressed in various passages of Scripture. The audacity with which some pervert these passages is quite of a piece with the daring liberties which, in order to get rid of almost all the doctrines of pure revelation, they take with the Word of God in general. While there are some passages evidently figurative, which these misinterpreters are for explaining literally, there are others, as, for example, those relating to this subject, evidently literal, which they are for explaining figuratively. And here they affirm, that the passages relative to the devil are highly figurative, and that the devil is not really a person, but moral evil personified; that is, sin spoken of as if it were a person. There are, indeed, some personifications in Scripture, as when it is said, that "the sun hasteth to *his* place," and that "wisdom hath builded *her* house." But then, common judgment, if not obscured or perverted by prejudice, or by the desire of supporting a favourite theory, is sufficient at once to distinguish when this figure of speech is used, and when it is not. In the case of Satan, such things are affirmed of him as could not be affirmed of sin in the abstract. Thus with regard to his having been expelled from heaven, how could it be said, without the utmost absurdity, that sin in the abstract was expelled from heaven, seeing sin could not have existed except in a rational and accountable creature. There must have been real and personal offenders who were guilty of sin, before sin, in any sense whatever, however highly figurative, could either exist in heaven, or be banished from heaven. The same argument might be applied to many of Satan's actions. To the obvious perception, too, of those who are in a situation

to judge candidly, there are a particularity and an impression of reality and truth pervading these passages in general, and the passage now read in particular, with which the gross error in question is altogether incongruous. Besides, if there had not been a real person to tempt our Lord, it is impossible that he could have been tempted at all. For whence do temptations arise? Either from without or from within. Men are tempted to sin, either when they are beset by other sinful creatures, or when they are drawn away of their own lusts and enticed. Whence, then, was Jesus Christ tempted? Certainly not from within, for he had no evil inclinations, no sin. "The prince of this world cometh," said he on another occasion, "and hath nothing in me." Christ's temptation was solely from without. But how was he tempted from without? Not surely by sin in the abstract, which is a mere nonentity, but by a sinful, living, and personal agent. There is no possibility of the temptation having really taken place otherwise. Nor would the inference to be deduced be different, even on the hypothesis of the whole of this narration being merely allegorical, or imaginary; for such an allegory would be founded on absurdities and impossibilities, and therefore would be altogether unworthy, not only of the Divine Spirit of wisdom, but of any sensible author. In fact, this passage of sacred history gives such a view of this subject, as completely obviates the objections, and refutes the errors referred to—such a view as ought to be enough to shame those who are accustomed to throw an air of ridicule around a topic so sublime, and so alarming, as that of a powerful and once noble and holy angel become an apostate, who opposed the Son of God, and who to this day is employing his still angelic energies to deceive and ruin mankind—and such a view as is full of instruction, warning, and comfort, to every serious inquirer.

It was just after our Lord's baptism, and the signal tokens of divine favour then shown to him, that his temptation took place. On this it has been often remarked, that great privileges and precious religious opportunities, are no security against temptation, nay, are very often soon followed by it. Thus it was after Paul was taken up into the third heaven, that the messenger of Satan came to buffet him. Hence a warning is suggested to Christians to be on their guard, after seasons of peculiar seriousness; and a call is given to them to be then very circumspect, and to hold fast what they have attained.

Now, however, Christ was well furnished to overcome temptation, for he was "*full of the Holy Ghost*." In like manner, his people can expect to obtain the victory only when they are strengthened with might, by God's Spirit in the inner man. Jesus may now have been disposed to avail himself of an opportunity for private meditation and devotion. It is said, however, that when he "*returned from Jordan, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness*." The expression in Mark* is: "Immediately the

* Mark i. 12.

Spirit driveth him into the wilderness;" this does not imply compulsion, but signifies that he was induced to go by a strong impulse of the Spirit. Some think the wilderness was that of Sinai: others, that in the neighbourhood of Jordan, which is said to have been very dismal. It was such a wilderness, that Jesus, when in it, was, according to Mark, with the wild beasts; and these, though they were restrained from setting upon him to hurt him, must have rendered his situation very dreary. Matthew* states, that the general purpose for which he was led out was "to be tempted of the devil." To this divine appointment, Jesus, who knew all things, willingly submitted; and in this there was a remarkable proof of his condescension and humiliation. The ends which his temptation served will appear more particularly in the sequel.

Luke says that Jesus was in the wilderness, "*being forty days tempted of the devil.*" The language of Mark is: "He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." It would seem, then, that Satan renewed his temptations from time to time, during the whole forty days. This he may have done, perhaps in secret suggestion, and in various ways not mentioned. What could have encouraged Satan to attempt to seduce the Saviour into sin, we are not informed. Whether he was emboldened to look for success by the recollection of the victory he gained over the first Adam in paradise; or whether he doubted of Christ's divinity; or whether the mere remembrance of his own fall made him suppose that even the incarnate Son of God was not impeccable; or whether, despairing of success, he was maliciously intent on at least vexing the Holy One, whom he knew he could not overcome, does not certainly appear. The fact, however, of the subtle and persevering attempt is unquestionable.

During these forty days Jesus "*did eat nothing*;" he fasted. As the antitype, he fulfilled the type of Moses, of whom we read,† that at the giving of the law, he was with the Lord on Mount Sinai, "forty days and forty nights, and did neither eat bread nor drink water." In like manner, Elijah‡ "did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God." It is obvious that all these three cases were miraculous. Christ Jesus did not fast, we may be sure, in token of repentance, or of his having any corruptions which required to be mortified. His fasting, however, was a part of his humiliation; it gave Satan an advantage over him, and therefore rendered his victory more remarkable; and in as far as his perfection allowed, it set a fine example to us of temperance and self-denial, and mortifying the deeds of the body.

With those who have adopted the grand principle of admitting no institutions except those which can be rested on New Testament authority, a few words will suffice to show the im-

* Matt. iv. 1.

† Exod. xxxiv. 28.

‡ 1 Kings xix. 8.

propriety of having founded, on this part of our Lord's history, the observance of what is called Lent. In process of time, when human inventions in worship were multiplied on each other, the very strange practice was introduced of setting apart no less a space of time than forty days, as a fast in commemoration and imitation of Christ's fast and temptation in the wilderness. So very important was the subject reckoned, that the dispute about the time of the year during which Lent should be kept,* gave rise to the most violent contentions. As usually observed, or pretended to be observed, by the Papists, there is in it much that is preposterous. The Saviour's fast, as to its continuance, was altogether miraculous, and nothing of his which was miraculous is intended for our close imitation. Luke expressly declares, that in those days he did eat nothing. But those who ape this miracle, may eat fish and various pleasant kinds of food, if they only abstain from some other kinds. Every such distinction of meats is not only unauthorized, but positively anti-scriptural. It is needless, however, to attack the more absurd appendages of this institution, since we object to it altogether. We hold the general principle, which at once settles every thing of this kind, that there must be scriptural authority for every religious institution, it being "vain to worship God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." We hold, in particular, that of all human institutions, the one in question is among the most indefensible and most encroaching. We maintain, that to suppose there can be any obligation to extraordinary temperance for forty days is entirely to overlook the genius of Christianity, and to place morality in seasons and numbers; we deny, that because Christ once in his lifetime fasted forty days and forty nights, there is any reason in attempting something like that once every year: we affirm, that no Church whatever has a right to enjoin any such thing: we insist on it, and in proof of the correctness of our averment, we appeal to reason and to historical facts, that to allow any such power to the Church, is to open the door to endless superstitions, and the grossest corruptions; and we are thankful to God that the founders of our Protestant Reformed Church were so enlightened as to sweep off the whole of these innovations; thankful that we stand fast in the liberty wherewith we are made free, and are not entangled in the yoke of ceremonial bondage; and thankful that on all such questions, we can fearlessly appeal to the Word of God, and say: "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." With regard to those who, retaining the name, and in a certain way, the observance, of Lent, have lopped off its extravagances, these remarks are very far from being intended as any reflection on their piety, or motives. But when so direct a call presents itself, justice to ourselves seems to require that we should state explicitly the great leading reason which has

* As preceding Easter.

guided the determination of our National Church on this, and on similar questions. With all respect for the feelings of those who think it right to set apart, on their annual return, particular seasons for the commemoration of particular events in the Saviour's history, we think it right to confine ourselves to New Testament institutions, on account of what we consider the correctness of the rule itself; and, it may be added, on account of the very hurtful length to which a departure from this rule led in the Romish Church.

During these forty days and forty nights, Jesus, being miraculously strengthened, had no need, and being deeply engaged in devotion, felt no desire, for food. At the expiry of that period, however, "*he hungered*:" he felt a great desire to eat, but had no food within his reach. Satan embraced what appeared to be so favourable an opportunity, and came visibly and boldly forward with the first temptation here recorded.

"*And the devil said unto Jesus, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread;*" or as in Matthew, "command that these stones be made bread." "If thou be the Son of God," if thou really be the Messiah, who is expected under that title, and who is to bear that relation to the Almighty. This may be considered either as a temptation to Christ to doubt of his being the Son of God, or rather a call on him to prove himself to be so, by working this miracle. The temptation is thus artfully introduced, inasmuch as there is an insinuation conveyed that if Christ should be unable, or refuse to work the miracle, there would be good reason to disbelieve, or at least to doubt of his Messiahship. And as it was thus artfully introduced, so it was very artfully contrived for the situation in which Christ was now placed. He had fasted long, and now began to feel strongly the cravings of hunger. There was no food to be had in the ordinary way. He could easily perform the miracle; and it might be supposed that as nature prompted to seek relief, it would be harmless to adopt the method suggested. It appeared far otherwise, however, to our Lord, who replied, "*It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*:"—by every word, or every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth, or is given by the bounty and power of God. This is quoted from Deut. viii. 3, where the whole verse runs thus: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." This quotation was strikingly appropriate to our Lord's circumstances, and shows, with sufficient plainness, the chief reason which led our Lord to resist the temptation. As the Lord supported the Israelites of old in the wilderness, where the ordinary means of sustenance were not to be had, and brought manna from heaven miraculously, rather than that they should continue to want; so Christ knew that though he

might have to fast for a season, he had no occasion to distrust his Father's care. He all along, too, felt more concern about his Father's glory, than about any gratifications to himself. He had meat to eat that the world knew not of; for his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. Even now he had perfect confidence in his Father's care and kindness, that he would provide, in good time, what was needful for his bodily support; and he would not show distrust, by creating food in so unnecessary a way. While this seems to have been the leading reason for his refusal, there were probably other reasons connected with this. The chief reason of his working miracles was to confirm the faith of *men* in his divine mission that they might be saved; but that reason could not at all apply in the case of Satan. It might, too, have been improper to yield to this request, even though it had been harmless, as it came from the devil, and Christ might have been considered as gratifying him, and as appearing to agree with him.

Though foiled in the attempt, the devil renewed his attack. According to the arrangement in Matthew, which appears to be in the order of time, the temptation from the pinnacle of the temple is next; but we shall follow the order in Luke.

"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." As it is naturally impossible for all the world to be seen by the human eye from any one spot at a time, it is supposed that with the advantage of a high and commanding situation, there was given by Satan, who is the prince of the power of the air, an airy representation of fine countries, and cities, and wealth, and regal splendour, and, in short, everything that is captivating in the world.

"And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." The devil was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lying; and, in particular, to say that the disposal of the world was given him, was a gross and impious falsehood: for though some power is allowed to him, he is completely under restraint, and nothing could be more impudently false, than to say that the Almighty had abdicated the providential government of the world, and transferred it to him. All this, however, Satan promised our Lord, on the very easy condition, forsooth, that he would *"fall down and worship him."* Shocking proposal! His audacious object now stands disclosed in light. Christ, therefore, could and would no longer bear with him, but exclaimed, *"Get thee behind me,"* or, as in Matthew, *"Get thee hence, Satan."* On this, after our Lord had completed what he had to say, Satan went away, this being the last temptation in the order of time. Similar to this, when Peter attempted to dissuade Christ from dying, was his exclamation: *"Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of*

men." Every one that opposes Christ is a Satan, an adversary, in so far ; but the devil is eminently *the* adversary.

Jesus followed up these sharp words with a most apposite quotation, which is given nearly as the words are in Deut. vi. 13, the substance of which is indeed repeatedly found in the Old Testament, and which may be considered as the fundamental principle of the whole law of God : "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*" Our Lord thus intimated that, on this principle, it would have been unlawful to worship any creature, even though it had been true that the government of the world had been committed to him, and though he had been a perfectly holy being ; and therefore that the objection to worshipping the devil held with still greater force. From this may be inferred the idolatry of worshipping saints and images. And it should be observed, that those who do so are not justified by saying that they only pay them the less honour, or worship by their assistance, and before them : for by comparing the forms of expression used by Luke and Matthew in the original, to worship "before the devil," * is found to be the same with worshipping the devil ; and there can be no doubt that Satan would have been satisfied had Christ fallen down before him in any way, or worshipped him at all, with whatever explanations. From this fundamental principle of the law may be also inferred the godhead of the Son ; for he is commanded to be worshipped, and therefore he is the Lord God.

Luke proceeds to relate the third temptation as follows : "*And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple.*" There is nothing said, either here or formerly, as to the mode in which our Lord was conveyed from one place to another. It is quite obvious that Satan might be said to "take" him to the top of a mountain, and to "set" him on a pinnacle of the temple, or even to carry him thither, though he acted only as his conductor, or guide. The word "pinnacle" conveys the idea of the top of a turret. The roof of the temple, however, like that of most other Eastern buildings, was flat and had battlements. The word used by the evangelists † appears to signify the extreme edge of the roof of the building, where they would stand close to the battlement. Josephus describes such a place as this may have been, when he speaks of the porch, from the top of which it was dreadful to look down, on account both of the height of the building itself and of the precipitous rock on which it was built.

And the devil said to Jesus : "*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence :*"—Give this proof of thy divine character by fearlessly leaping over, and alighting unhurt. "*For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" As Christ had quoted Scripture in opposition

* ἵνα προσκυνῇ αὐτόν.—Luke.

† πτερυγίων, pinna.

to the former temptation, so Satan now quotes in support of the present. The words are taken from the 11th and 12th verses of the 91st Psalm, and express a promise which, rightly understood, applies to Christ himself, and to every one of his followers. It has been well remarked, however, that the passage is here both misquoted and misapplied. It is misquoted, as an important clause is omitted, namely, that God was to keep his people "in all their ways;" that is, in every proper way, in every way in which duty called them to walk. Hence it is also misapplied, as it was never intended to encourage people to expect to be preserved when they were going out of their way, and unnecessarily exposing themselves to danger. In fact, this temptation was exactly a contrast to the first—that being a temptation to distrust, and this being a temptation to presumption. Our Lord replied to this by the properly chosen and fairly quoted text found in Deut. vi. 16: "*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" The general and primary idea of the word "tempt," is to try. And in the particular application of it to God in a sinful way, it signifies to put his love, or power, or faithfulness, to any unnecessary, and, therefore, improper trial.* In this view, Christ's casting himself down would have been tempting God, because it would have been demanding additional and unnecessary proof of Christ's being the Son of God. And it would have been putting his love and faithfulness to an improper trial, by presuming upon them, when he should have unnecessarily put himself into danger of being dashed to pieces. Our Lord, therefore came off victorious in this, as well as in the foregoing instances.

"*And when the devil had ended all the temptation,*" when he had used his utmost endeavours to ensare him, but was foiled in them all, "*he departed,*" making a shameful retreat. He departed from Christ, however, only "*for a season.*" Whatever he may have done besides, we are sure that he returned again, if not with the view of leading him into sin, yet to bruise his heel, to persecute and annoy him, by stirring up Judas to betray him, and doing every thing he could to thicken the gloom of what our Lord called "the hour of his enemies and the power of darkness."

Matthew says that when the devil left Jesus, "behold angels came and ministered unto him." It might be shown, in a variety of instances, how they ministered to the son of God on other occasions. Suffice it, however, to say that, on this occasion, their ministrations must have been opportune and comforting; and that, left to conjecture the precise nature of their services, we may suppose that they supplied him with food to recruit his bodily strength, that they cheered his mind by talking of the things of God and of salvation, and that they honoured him with adoration and praise.

Let us now shortly advert to some of the most important

* Exod. xvii. 2-7; Numb. xiv. 22; Matt. xvi. 1.

inferences deducible from this extraordinary piece of sacred history.

1. In the first place, in the whole of this signal triumph of Jesus Christ, we see *a demonstration of his ability to fulfil the great purpose for which he appeared on earth.* "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Here was one remarkable triumph, which was afterwards followed up in various ways, and especially by our Lord's atoning death, in which having "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." He has been carrying on the same contest successfully ever since; and from the recorded instances of his success, there can be no doubt that he will entirely "bruise the head," or destroy the power of the serpent, by consigning him and all his confederates to destruction, and by securing the salvation of all his own believing and obedient people.

2. *The disciples of Christ are here warned to expect temptation, and yet encouraged to expect deliverance from it.* If their Master was thus assaulted, they cannot expect to escape. "The devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He desires to have believers, that he may sift them as wheat. He artfully adapts his temptations to existing circumstances, as we see he did in the first of the three temptations of our Lord. It is but seldom that he makes an open and direct attack. His temptations are the most dangerous when they are the most plausible, and the least offensive. Much of this we must expect. We must be careful, indeed, not to throw ourselves into the way of temptation, but it will be impossible for us altogether to avoid it; and when it comes, we should be prepared to encounter it.

Now it should be, on various accounts, a great encouragement for us to recollect that Jesus himself was tempted. This, for example, shows that such temptations, if not indulged, are troubles, and not sins. Nor should any person altogether despond, though he be tempted even to the greatest unbelief, and the most horrid actions, if he resist them. Thus, too, we are assured that Jesus has acquired, from his own experience, ability and willingness to assist us. In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

3. We are here taught *the advantage of the legitimate use of Scripture.* We are reminded, it is true, that the Word of God is often misquoted and perverted, and wrested to men's own destruction, and to the destruction of those who are misled by them, and we are cautioned to be on our guard against this. But, after all, the only way of being secure against false interpreta-

tions and false quotations, is to be ourselves well versed in the divine oracles. We should make conscience, then, of being familiar with their pages. This will be for our advantage at all times, and especially in seasons of temptation. We have seen how apt the passages were which Christ quoted. An appropriate passage will also often be found efficacious to keep us back from evil, and to enable us to gain the victory. In these contests, there is no weapon like the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

4. Besides inferences to be drawn from this passage as a whole, there are *various warnings given by each of the three temptations in particular*. In fact, the three temptations here recorded, are those which, in substance, are most commonly presented to men. The first was a *temptation to distrust the providence of God, and to have recourse to improper means to obtain food*. Now Satan, in like manner, often tempts men to entertain hard thoughts of God, as if he had forsaken them, and then to have recourse to improper, perhaps dishonest, means of obtaining what they desire. But we are here taught that nothing sinful must be done, even though it were to alleviate hunger itself. We are taught to trust in providence—to be careful for nothing—to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, believing that then all other things will be added unto us. We are taught to be more concerned about spiritual than temporal things, to esteem God's words more than our necessary food, and to labour more for the meat that endureth to eternal life, than for the bread that perisheth, ever remembering that a man's life, his supreme good, consisteth not in the abundance of external good things which he may possess, but that God's favour is life, and his loving-kindness better than life.

The next temptation, at least the next in order in Luke, was the offer of the kingdoms of the world, if Christ would worship the devil. In like manner, one of the devil's most usual and most successful temptations consists in the *sinful pleasures, and the riches and pomp of this world*. Allured by these, many are led on to their ruin. It is but a little portion of these they gain at the best, for Satan's promises are deceitful; he promises more than he can bestow. Overcome, however, by the temptation, and instigated by the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, one gives himself to sinful indulgence; another sacrifices all conscience to rise to power and splendour; and another gives himself up to covetousness, which is idolatry: in short, in various ways, many may be said to bow down and worship Satan, the god of this world. May we be preserved from such infatuation! Dreadful infatuation it would be, even though he were to make his highest promise good to the very letter: for what should we be profited though we gained the whole world, if we lost our own souls?

The other temptation was a complete contrast to the first, namely, a temptation to *presumption*. It is a delightful thing to

be assured that no real evil can befall us while we are faithful. Let us not, however, voluntarily and rashly expose ourselves to danger, in the hope that Providence will interfere to deliver us. Let us not presume to trust that the Lord will be with us when we deviate from the way of duty. Let us especially beware of the horrid presumption of venturing upon sin, from the idea that God will not suffer us to perish. This would be exactly like casting ourselves down from a precipice, in the hope that we might escape unhurt. Let us study to cultivate a spirit of holy boldness, but always in conjunction with a spirit of godly fear.

The way, too, in which this history concludes, is full of instruction. We are here taught that, though Satan may depart from us, it will only be *for a season*. We shall have to contend with him, from time to time, as long as we are in the body. Let those, then, who are led captive by him at his will, earnestly pray for deliverance from his thralldom; and let those who are in a good measure already freed from it, be on their guard against his wiles.

Though, unquestionably, Satan is a formidable adversary, there is no reason why Christ's people should give way to despondency and terror. Their Lord proved victorious, and so shall they. No trial will be laid on them but what he will enable them to bear, if they rely on his strength: and he will with the temptation make a way for them to escape. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Happy they who thus proceed! The contest may be sharp, but the result will be glorious. Angels, and the God of angels, will assist them in the combat, and when they have overcome through the blood of the Lamb, the same angels will join them in celebrating the victory.

LECTURE XVI.

LUKE IV. 14-22.

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. 17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

THE foregoing part of this chapter gave us an account of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness. As he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness full of the Holy Ghost, so we are now told that he "*returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.*" This may signify both that he returned in consequence of an impulse of the Spirit, and also that when he returned, the lustre of his miracles and the impression made by his preaching evidently showed that he was possessed of the influences of the Spirit in a high degree, even without measure. The report which was spread of his works and of his wisdom, soon made him very famous throughout all Galilee and the surrounding country. We are informed that while he was in Galilee, "*he taught in their synagogues.*"

It was only at the temple at Jerusalem that the sacrifices could be offered up, and the various ceremonies of the law performed: for the purposes, however, of religious instruction, and public worship, synagogues were erected in almost every town of any note. The origin of these is not exactly ascertained. There is no express scriptural command for their erection: the spirit, however, of the precepts respecting the instruction of the people and the observance of the Sabbath, and the obvious necessity for something of the kind, appear to have suggested the idea. The word "synagogue" signifies either an assembly of people, or the place in which they assemble. It is certain that such places were common after the Babylonish captivity: and though some have questioned their existence before that time, yet as it is said in the 74th Psalm, 8th verse, where a description is given of the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans: "They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in

the land," it seems undeniable that, even before the captivity, there were some places which, though probably not exactly the same, answered much the same purpose as the synagogues in after times. The order of the synagogue came to be exactly fixed and carefully observed, and in most respects it continues the same to the present day. There was a council for direction, whose chief was called the ruler of the synagogue. There were seats for the men, and seats for the women apart. In every synagogue there was a chest, in which was kept, with great care, a fine copy of the law; that is, of the Books of Moses. The synagogues were open on the Sabbath, and on other two days of the week, thrice each of these days. It was properly the office of the rulers to teach; but they sometimes invited persons of experience belonging to the synagogue, and esteemed strangers, known as teachers, to speak. Thus, when Paul and Barnabas were in the synagogue at Antioch, "the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." * In this manner, Jesus Christ frequently taught in the synagogues of Galilee, "*being glorified of all*;" that is, being, at least at first, universally admired and applauded.

Then follows a particular account of how he conducted himself in one visit to a synagogue—an account which is to be found only in Luke. Jesus "*came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.*" Born in Bethlehem, it was in Nazareth where he spent the early years of his life, being subject to his parents, and increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Hence he was called Jesus of Nazareth: and Nazareth was called "his own city." Having now exercised his ministry in various other parts of the country, he came to Nazareth, where the celebrity he had elsewhere acquired must have excited no little curiosity to hear him. "*He went into the synagogue*" of Nazareth "*on the Sabbath-day*"—a day on which it was always open, and on which he would have an opportunity of addressing a great number of his townsmen. Exempt from the sinfulness, but partaking of the ordinary feelings of our nature, these feelings may be supposed to have been peculiar when he was called on to preach, in the house where he had so long been a hearer. His going into the synagogue was not a rare and extraordinary occurrence, for it was his usual "*custom.*" We know that he attended the solemn feasts at the temple; and we here see that he was also exemplary in his attendance on the services of the synagogue. Though it is not expressly stated, yet from our knowledge of the customs of the synagogue, we must conclude that Christ did not read and preach without the request or at least the concurrence, of the ruler.

The first thing which Jesus did was "*to read.*" Reading the Scriptures was one of the stated parts of the synagogue-service. Thus James declared in the council of Jerusalem,† "*Moses of*

* Acts xiii. 15.

† Acts xv. 21.

old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day." The public reading of the Scriptures is so obviously calculated for instruction, that it ought never to be laid aside. It is obvious, however, that there was a propriety in reading in public longer portions, when copies of the Scriptures were rare, and education less common, than when the art of printing has multiplied copies, and the art of reading is almost universally diffused. According, probably, to the ancient custom, our Lord "*stood up*" to read, that being reckoned a respectful posture in which to read or hear ~~read~~ the Word of God. On this occasion there was handed to him the prophecy of Isaiah, which would be on a long roll of parchment folded up. Having "*opened,*" or literally unrolled,* the volume of "*the book,* *he found that place*" of it which we now mark as the 61st chapter. He appears to have read the passage from a copy of the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament. The circumstance of many of the quotations in the New Testament being taken from that translation accounts for many of the differences which an attentive reader will observe between these passages as they stand in our New Testament, and the parallel passages in our Old Testament, which is translated directly from the original Hebrew. As to the more minute criticisms which might be made on this, and may similar passages, there are but few of them suitable to a public exercise of this kind.

The passage read by our Lord opens with these words: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.*" Believers have the Spirit of God in limited measure, and for their own private benefit; but Jesus Christ has the Spirit without measure, and for the benefit of all who apply to him. The prophets who had the miraculous gift of the Spirit, had it only at times; but Jesus had it always—it rested, or remained, on him. In the words of Isaiah in his 11th chapter, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, *because,*" or rather for the purpose† to which "*he hath anointed me.*" You must be quite aware that prophets, priests, and kings, were set apart to their office by having oil, or a fine thin ointment, poured upon them. This act was not only grateful and respectful, but considered as emblematical of their being qualified for their office by the gifts of the Spirit. It is from this circumstance that the name Christ is derived, which signifies the same in Greek as Messiah does in Hebrew, namely, Anointed. We do not read of any literal unction in his case; but the thing signified was his in perfection, and was visibly conferred upon him when the Holy Ghost descended on

* Ἀνεπτύξας το βιβλίον, καὶ ἐπιλεγόμενος ἴησ, &c.—*Herodotus*, lib. i.

† οὐ ἵναται.

him at his baptism. The following words from the 45th Psalm are quoted in the 1st chapter to the Hebrews, and expressly applied there to Jesus Christ: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." In this way, Christ was both set apart and qualified for all his offices as our Redeemer, and particularly for his office as our great Prophet, or revealer of the divine will. "He hath anointed me *to preach the gospel*;" or, as in Isaiah, "to preach good tidings," for so the word gospel signifies. And what news were ever heard so good as those of deliverance from condemnation and sin, restoration to the divine favour, and the full discovery and free offer of life eternal? "Behold," said the angel to the shepherds, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Of the tidings of this salvation, Jesus Christ himself was an earnest and laborious preacher.

It is here foretold that he was to preach the gospel "*to the poor*." This he actually did; and in answer to the Baptist's inquiry, he referred to this circumstance as a proof of his being the promised Messiah: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them."* The word "poor" may here be understood both literally and figuratively. It is to be understood literally. It was a fact that great multitudes of the lower classes flocked to Christ's preaching; and we are told that "the common people heard him gladly." The same still holds true, in principle and in fact; the same attention is still paid to bring the saving truths of the gospel within the reach of the common people, many of whom still receive these truths with faith and cordiality. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" What a pleasing contrast does this point in the genius of Christianity present to the narrow, exclusive, and proud spirit of almost every other system! Ancient philosophers made no considerable efforts for the dissemination of their wisdom, such as it was, and even were ready to consider the majority of the people as entirely below their regard, and studiously confined their knowledge to themselves. The heathen priests had a round of imposing external superstitions to amuse the people, but the mysteries, as they were called, were carefully concealed. In India, at the present day, "so far are the Brahmans from wishing the inferior castes to acquire their knowledge, that they keep them as much as possible in a state of ignorance. And in the code of Menu it is enacted, that 'if one of the Sudra caste read the Vedas to any of the other three tribes, or listen to them, heated oil, wax,

* Matt. xi. 4.

and melted tin, shall be poured into his ears, and the orifice stopped up; and that if a Sudar get by heart the Vedas, he shall be put to death.'"^{*} Not so the spirit of the Gospel, nor the conduct of its Author and of its true supporters. It needs no concealment—it seeks no concealment; nay, it courts universal inquiry. It is sublime enough to delight and to astonish the most cultivated intellect; and it is plain enough to be understood by the most untutored mind. It teaches us to treat no soul as vile for whom Christ died. It seeks, as it is calculated, to exalt and to bless the lowliest and the most destitute of our kind; and often is it still the means of fulfilling the words in Zech. xi. 11, prophetically spoken by our chief Shepherd: "So the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord."

But this word "poor" may also be taken figuratively for the poor in spirit—the meek and lowly in heart. Indeed, the word "meek" is employed in the parallel passage in Isaiah. On such our Lord pronounces the benedictions: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." As the gospel was to be addressed, so it would be peculiarly acceptable, to such humble, meek, and afflicted hearers.

"*He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted;*" or, as in Isaiah, "to bind up the broken-hearted." The broken-hearted is a strong way of describing those who, from any cause, are overwhelmed with great distress. Here the reference seems to be chiefly to those who are under deep conviction of sin. Thus it is said in the 51st Psalm: "The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." As broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up in order to their being healed, so it is foretold that Jesus Christ was to take the most effectual means to mitigate the pain, allay the fears, and remove the distress, of awakened and trembling souls. He is the great Physician of souls; and the chief remedy he employs is his own blood. In other words, the method he adopts to deliver men from the guilt, danger, and terror of sin, and of course from the overwhelming pressure of every other sorrow, is bringing them to the knowledge and belief of the blessed doctrine of reconciliation through his meritorious obedience and atoning death.

He was sent also "*to preach deliverance to the captives.*" Sinners are often represented in Scripture as in a state of captivity, or bondage. They are in captivity to sin and Satan: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." While sinners promise themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for, "of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Sinners are held, too, as prisoners under a sentence of condemnation, ready, if grace prevent not, to be led out to execution. From this awful state Christ proclaims,

^{*} Forbes' Oriental Memoirs.

and actually bestows, deliverance. This also he effects by his own death, according to the language in Zech. ix. 11: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Or, as the apostle says to the Colossians: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." This deliverance, being a deliverance from sin itself, as well as from the penal consequences of sin, implies genuine conversion to God, as well as pardon from God; it implies repentance, as well as faith, in those who are liberated. God gives them "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Christ was sent also to preach "*recovering of sight to the blind.*" This clause is not found in the Hebrews, nor, of course, in the English version of the 61st chapter of Isaiah; it is found, however, in the Septuagint, or Greek version. The same idea is expressed in that passage which is a very close parallel to this—in the 42d chapter of Isaiah, from the 6th verse: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." You are aware that Christ gave sight to the blind, in the literal sense of the word. Thus, we read of two men restored by him to sight in the 9th chapter of Matthew; of blind Bartimeus restored to sight in the 10th of Mark; and of various other similar cases. But you are also aware that these cures on the bodily eye were emblematical of that spiritual illumination to which the clause under consideration chiefly refers. Men are all by nature spiritually blind; that is, ignorant of God and religion, blind to the nature and excellence of divine truth, and to their own highest interest. But Christ came to restore them to sight. He preaches recovering of sight to the blind. By means of the reading and preaching of his Word, and the influences of his Spirit, he informs their understanding, and makes them wise to salvation.

"*He hath sent me,*" the passage continues, "*to set at liberty them that are bruised.*" The last three clauses of this verse, taken together, may be considered as a description of the accumulated miseries of imprisonment, such as it was sometimes known under cruel tyrants. Unfortunate persons sometimes were not only cast into prison, but were loaded with heavy chains, and had their eyes put out. This was the case with Zedekiah, of whom it is said that the Chaldeans "put out his eyes, bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." Prisoners were also sometimes cruelly beaten. Thus, the misery of guilty sinners is described

by the comparisons of their being imprisoned, loaded with fetters, and blinded; and in this clause, as bruised, wounded, and broken with stripes and blows. Now, to a man thus incarcerated, bound, blind, and wounded, how welcome would be the kind visit of a deliverer, who should not only throw open the prison-door, but heal his wounds and bring back his sight! Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ restores and heals those who from any cause are bruised, or broken with affliction; especially those who are wounded in their conscience because of sin. "The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." The Psalmist calls on men to praise the Lord, who healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

The quotation closes with these words: "*He hath sent me to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" This is an allusion to what was called the year of jubilee, of which a full account is contained in the 25th chapter of Leviticus, from the 8th verse. Every fiftieth year, the trumpet of the jubilee was sounded, when prisoners were set free, and the poor recovered their lands with which they had been obliged to part, and every man returned to his own possession. This might be called the year of the Lord, both as being of the Lord's appointment, and also as partaking so much of a religious character; and this must have been an acceptable year indeed—a year gratefully welcomed by the nation at large, and especially by the more distressed part of them. Now, this Jewish institution, as the clause under consideration is of itself sufficient to show, was typical of the glorious period of gospel deliverance—a period appointed of God to be joyfully hailed by all who looked for redemption in Israel, and "acceptable" also, in the sense that the Lord was then graciously to accept all who should come to him for salvation. When Jesus appeared preaching the kingdom of God, he sounded, so to speak, the trumpet of the gospel jubilee; he proclaimed deliverance to the captives of sin and Satan; he proposed the exceeding riches of his grace to the acceptance of the spiritually poor; and he invited the forlorn wanderers to return home to God, and to take possession of the children's portion here, as an earnest of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

When Jesus had read thus far in Isaiah, "*he closed the book,*" or rolled up the volume, having found sufficient subject for most interesting and most appropriate remark. "*He gave the book,*" or roll, "*again to the minister,*" or officer, probably, of the synagogue, that it might be deposited by him in the place where it usually lay. After this we are told Jesus "*sat down.*" The attitude of sitting has been often used by teachers; it is expressive of gravity, dignity, and authority, and is in some situations very suitable. Thus, in reference to their teaching, we read: "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Christ is said to have sat when he delivered his sermon on the mount: and it is

recorded* that "he sat down and taught" the people in the temple. It is almost unnecessary, however, to say that in such a case the position is of very inferior consequence. The attitude, indeed, of standing may be considered as the most suitable, when it is either wished to show deference to the audience, or found necessary to make any very considerable exertion. Accordingly, we have also scriptural examples of the use of this attitude; as when we read, in the 1st chapter of the Acts, that "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples;" and, in the 13th chapter of the same book, that in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul, in proceeding to address the congregation, "stood up and beckoned with his hand."

Having noticed the propriety of reading the Scriptures in public, we may now advert to *the importance of such reading being followed up with exposition*. Our Lord did not reckon it enough to read this passage from Isaiah: he proceeded to comment on it. Such was generally, and such ought to be generally, the practice of those who hold the office of public instructors. Ministers ought not only to read, but cause the people to understand what is read. The following passage from the 8th chapter of Nehemiah describes an exercise which must have very closely corresponded with what among us is commonly called lecturing: "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man, into the street that was before the water gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the scribe brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding. And he read therein, from morning until mid-day, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And the Levites, and others, caused the people to understand the law. So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

While Jesus thus sat down to teach, "*the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.*" There seems to have been something, both in the matter and in the manner of our Lord's teaching, which deeply engaged the attention of his auditors, whatever might be the sentiments with which they heard at the time, or the use which they made of his instructions afterwards. When he was teaching in the temple, "all the people were very attentive to hear him,"† literally "hung upon him." Without attention on the part of the hearers, it is evident that the labour of teachers must be in vain. Now, as the eye is one of the readiest avenues to the mind, and often the cause either of distracting the thoughts, or of fixing them aright, the proper management of the eye deserves

* John viii. 2.

† Luke xix. 48.

the attention of those who desire to reap benefit from the public services of religion. According to propriety and common custom, the person speaking, and the person spoken to, look at each other. From this may be naturally inferred the rule both for prayer and for sermon. In prayer, the person speaking is the minister, not, however, for himself alone, but for the whole people; and the person spoken to is God. And as God is represented as regarding, or looking to them, so they are to be considered as looking to God. If it were possible, their bodily eye should be directed to God: but that being impossible, the general rule is, that the less their eye is fixed on any outward object whatever, which is at all likely to lead away the mind from God, so much the better; and in particular, it is plainly improper, and very likely to be hurtful to the minister to look at the people, or for the people to look at the minister, during prayer. During the preaching and hearing of the word, however, the case is quite the reverse. The preacher, so far as circumstances permit, should look to the people to whom he speaks; and the people spoken to—that is, those who are so situated that they can do it with ease—follow the way which is respectful, becoming, and most likely to fix their attention on what is said, when their eye is frequently directed to the preacher. But whatever may be in this, it is unquestionable, that wandering eyes generally cause wandering thoughts, and that when we are professedly engaged about the things of God, it is of the utmost consequence to have the heart fixed on them. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him.

“And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” More of his discourse is not recorded. We are only furnished with a single sentence; that sentence, however, may be considered as a summary of the whole. He probably proceeded to show how he himself was the person foretold by the evangelical prophet. He may have entered on explanations of the particular clauses of the passage he had read, enlarging on the nature and importance of the spiritual blessings he had come to impart, and urging them on the acceptance of all whom he addressed. But in whatever way he spoke, the effect, at least for the moment, was powerful.

“All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” They could not but confess to one another that his words were gracious, full of grace, both as to the matter and as to the manner. And there being an inward witness in their hearts, their ears heard with admiration, and their very countenances might be said to bear witness to him by their interested and wondering expression. Thus even Job could say: “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me.” He who always spake as never man spake, now spoke on this most beautiful passage in a most beautiful manner: and well might every believer that heard him have now exclaimed, in the words

of the Psalmist to Messiah: "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."

There can be no doubt, my friends, that those who were in the synagogue of Nazareth, on the Sabbath on which our Lord preached there, were highly favoured; and we may be ready to think, how happy should we have been to have been present on that occasion; how intently should our eyes have been fixed on him, and how fondly should we have drunk in, and how carefully should we have retained, the gracious words which then proceeded out of his mouth!—But though he lives not on earth in our day, though our bodily eyes shall never see him, and our bodily ears never hear him below; yet the blessed truths of his word, the grace of his heart, and his power and willingness to help, are still the same. We may still turn to the 61st chapter of Isaiah, and read the very same passage which Jesus read in the synagogue: nay, we may turn, as we have now done, to the 4th of Luke, and find, as we have now found, Christ's brief but instructive application of that passage to himself. We can meditate on its infinitely important and most consolatory contents: nor is there any assignable reason why it may not have as good an effect at this moment as it had about eighteen hundred years ago. The mere words, and the mere external circumstances in which the words were then read, or have been now read, could neither secure, nor prevent, the efficacy of the sentiments. In any case, nothing but the quickening power of divine grace is competent, but, in every case that power is amply sufficient to send them home to the heart. Let us hope, then, that as we have been now reading them, many a one has been feeling their sacred energy, and inwardly as it were saying to himself: "And is this the character, and this the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? then he is altogether such a Saviour as I want; nay, he is, and may he every day more and more sensibly become, all my salvation and all my desire."

Unquestionably, in by far the most important sense of the words, it may still be said: "This day is this scripture fulfilling in your ears." Let all, however, who now listen, be reminded, that it is not enough that it be fulfilling in their ears, if it be not also fulfilling in their hearts, in their own personal experience. Let me then beseech you all, in turning to this passage, to seek its fulfilment in yourselves.

The Spirit of the Lord, with which Christ was anointed, is still upon him, and upon him that it may be communicated to you. Pray, then, that he may send the Comforter into your hearts, to abide with you for ever, and that out of his fulness you may receive grace upon grace.

Jesus, from his Word and by his ministers, is still preaching the gospel to the poor. Let, therefore, the poor in this world's goods be thankful that his unsearchable riches are held out to

them; and let every soul cherish that poverty of spirit to which alone the free grace of the gospel will sound as good news, and on which alone the blessing of the Eternal will ever descend.

Jesus is still present to heal the broken-hearted; therefore, let none of you say: "My case is beyond his power; I am irrecoverably sunk in melancholy; I am cut off from all joy for my part;—the heart that is like to break may be strengthened, but the heart that is actually broken cannot be made whole." Say no such thing, for so saying you would offend against the generation of God's children, against the interest of others, against the welfare of yourselves, and against the plenitude of the love and of the power of him who declares that he is sent to heal even the broken-hearted. Only put yourselves under his management, and your restoration will be certain. Make all your pains and burdens and griefs known to him, and he will find a remedy for every one of them. Begin, however, with the burden of your sins. Go to him with confession, and earnest supplication. Tell him that you are laden with iniquity, helpless and undone. Tell him that though you have many burdens, this lies the heaviest on your heart of all; that there are other evils which you can bear, but that this evil is utterly insupportable; and beseech him, by the blood which he shed for you, to take away your guilt, and to grant you peace of conscience. Apply in this way, and success will be certain. And then after this, there is not a trouble which can touch your hearts, but will soon be removed or alleviated, or you will be strengthened to bear it, and to improve it. Do you labour under severe personal distress? has disappointment blasted your fair prospects of worldly prosperity? does the recent death of some one who was dear to you as your own soul cause your heart to bleed, and to feel as if it would sink away? or does there press on you any other of the many sad evils incident to fallen humanity?—remember that the Son of God is sent to heal the broken-hearted, and apply to him to heal you, and you shall be healed; he will give you "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Christ is still preaching "deliverance to the captives," therefore let none ask in a spirit of unbelief, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered." Let those who are yet in thralldom to Satan, hear the Saviour now saying: "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, for to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you." And let believers stand fast in the liberty with which they have been made free, and not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

Jesus is still ready to recover the blind. Outward miracles, indeed, have ceased, but the light of saving knowledge he is ready to impart to all who apply. Let, then, those who are totally blind come to him, and anoint their eyes with eye-salve,

that they may see: and let those who are partly enlightened, seek to see still more clearly, and be careful to walk in the light.

Jesus Christ is still ready to liberate and restore those who are bruised. In consequence of what he has done and suffered, the high and lofty One who inhabiteth the praises of eternity, whose name is holy, thus speaks: "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Let every bruised and wounded soul, then, apply to him, and say: "Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

And, my brethren, as the gospel is still preached, and the trumpet of the spiritual jubilee still sounding, "the acceptable year of the Lord" still continues. He still waits to be gracious. Your time, however, is hastening to a close: delay not, therefore, to attend to the things which belong to your peace, lest they be for ever hid from your eyes. We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith: "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

LECTURE XVII.

LUKE IV. 22-32.

“ And they said, Is not this Joseph's son ? 23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. 28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath. 29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, 31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath-days. 32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”

OUR Lord had just been reading the Scriptures, and preaching, in the synagogue at Nazareth. The passage to which he turned was part of the 61st chapter of Isaiah, containing an account of his own appointment and qualification by the Holy Spirit, and describing, in the most beautiful and engaging manner, the blessed effects which were to follow the discharge of his mediatorial office. Such a passage, expounded by such a preacher, could hardly fail, in one way or another, to make a strong impression on the audience. They could not but confess that he had spoken admirably; “ they all bear him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” In this connection, the evangelist thus proceeds with the narrative :

“ *And they said, Is not this Joseph's son ?* ” The fact of his being Joseph's supposed and legal son was indisputable, and well known. The spirit in which the question was put, as it admits of various interpretations, may in fact have been different in the different classes of those who were present. There is a sense in which the question would imply holy admiration and faith. That one born in so humble a family, trained up in such circumstances, and possessed of so few advantages for education, should discourse in such a manner, and discover a wisdom which entirely eclipsed that of the most learned doctors, might well excite astonishment, and suggest and confirm the idea that his knowledge was more than human: and it is probable that there were a few present who felt in this way. But the question may have owed its origin to sentiments of a very opposite nature, and of various gradations of evil, from the surmises

of doubt, to the conclusions of rejection and contempt: and it is too obvious that it was intended by the majority to convey some such unfavourable impression. It is as if they had said: "We have, it is true, been surprised into admiration, and strangely carried away by what we have heard; but let us bethink ourselves, and let us rally our hostile resolution. Whatever we may have felt, there can be nothing great about this man, for his origin is low; there can be nothing wise about him, for he has never been taught in our schools. In a word, is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter?" Indulging some such spirit as this, and objecting to his parentage and connections, they rejected his claim to a divine mission; they despised his offered blessings, they were offended at him, and they hardened themselves in their wicked determination to oppose him. This spirit is more fully expressed in the parallel passage of Matt. xiii. 54: "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him."

Verse 23: "*And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.*" Our Lord knew what was passing in the minds of many of his hearers, and what objections they were disposed to make: and he here anticipates and answers them. There is, no doubt, a justness in this proverb, when it is properly restrained and applied; for whoever, says he, can cure infallibly any complaint, must surely be expected not to neglect that complaint in himself; nay, to begin with himself. In reference to the personal character of the instructor, there is a similarity between this proverb and these words of Christ: "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye;" and these words of Paul: "Thou who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" It is not, however, to our Lord's personal character that the proverb is here intended to apply; and it would have been difficult to see its proper application, had it not been for what follows. In this verse, as in many more, the latter clause explains the former. In the 2d chapter of John, we are told that after the miracle in Cana of Galilee, Jesus went down to Capernaum, "and continued there not many days," or a short time. During that time, however, it would appear that he performed some miracles; for he did many in various places which are not recorded, and these were chiefly miracles of healing. The report of these had reached to Nazareth, some of the inhabitants of which, our Lord knew, were now ready to say: "Whatsoever works we have heard were

done by thee at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country." Do not neglect thine own town and thine own people. Physician, heal thyself: for men are ready to identify themselves with their friends, and to consider what is done by others, or by themselves to their friends, as done to themselves. In short, these people were offended that he had wrought miracles at Capernaum, and was not doing so at Nazareth; and they called on him immediately to exercise his miraculous powers among them.

In reply to this, our Lord proceeded to say:

"No prophet is accepted in his own country." Or, as it is in Matthew, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." The treatment received by many of the Old Testament prophets furnished too good ground for this proverb; and the Jews, in the days of Christ, had not improved in their spirit. "Ye stiff-necked," says Stephen, "and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." It generally happened, too, that those who were most intimate with the prophets, were most prejudiced against them. While our Lord, who was the chief of prophets, experienced general opposition, there was a peculiar prejudice against him among the inhabitants of Nazareth, where he spent his early years; and even among some of his own relations. John* says: "Neither did his brethren believe in him;" and Mark† informs us that "when his friends heard" of his proceedings, "they went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself." In this particular connection, the fulfilment of the proverb in Christ is given by him as one reason why he did not work many miracles at Nazareth. There was a strong prejudice there against him. Should it be thought that this only rendered miracles more necessary for their conversion, it is to be remembered that miracles of themselves never converted any, and that, in a certain state of mind, they only hardened men, and rendered them more inexcusable. Where humility and teachableness were wanting, he would not expend his power in vain. They might call for wonders upon wonders, but he would not gratify their selfishness, or their idle curiosity. Intimately connected with this state of mind was the reason for withholding miracles furnished by their unbelief. They had not that faith in his power to work miracles which he in general required; and in this denial their want of that faith might be considered as justly punished. In the parallel passage of Matthew,‡ after the proverb is quoted, it is immediately added: "And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." And so it is in the process of spiritual healing: unbelief shuts out the efficacy

* John vii. 5.

† Mark iii. 21.

‡ Matt. xiii. 58.

of the word, and provokes the Lord to withdraw. If we will not believe, surely we shall not be established.

With the same view, our Lord thus continued :

“ But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land ; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” The history here referred to is related at length in the 17th and 18th chapters of the First Book of Kings ; but it would lead us too far away from the subject in hand to make any comment on that history, or even to relate all its circumstances. It may be proper, however, to observe, that the drought being said to have continued three years and a half, is not inconsistent with the 1st verse of the 18th chapter of 1 Kings, in which it is said that “ the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab ; and I will send rain upon the earth.” The third year or the currency of the third year may be supposed to have been only two years and a half. But that period is to be reckoned, not from the beginning of the drought, but from Elijah’s leaving the brook Cherith, and going to Zarephath, or Sarepta. After the drought set in, he went, as commanded, and hid himself by the brook Cherith, “ and it came to pass, after a while,” literally, “ at the end of days,” which may signify a year, “ that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.” Add this year to the two years and a half that elapsed afterwards, and the drought altogether continued three years and a half.* During such an unexampled continuance of drought and famine, there must have been many poor widows in Israel ; and yet Elijah was sent, not to any of them, but to a widow of a different nation altogether, a widow of Sarepta, a city which belonged to the Sidonians.

Our Lord then brings forward another case of a similar nature : *“ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus,”* or Elisha, *the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian ;*” that is, none of the lepers in Israel was cleansed, but Naaman, who was a Syrian, was cleansed. As we must not, in order to offer remarks, however inviting, lose sight of the exact object which our Lord had in view, we shall rest satisfied with referring you to the original history, contained in 2 Kings, 5th chapter. This, you observe, was a case similar to the foregoing in respect of the relief being brought, not to an Israelite, but to a Gentile—not to one of the prophet’s own countrymen or kindred, but to a stranger and foreigner ; and both these cases were stronger than was necessary for our Lord’s vindication.

Now, these two examples, as here introduced, were a most satisfactory defence of our Lord’s procedure, and also teach several important lessons. For example, apart from all considerations connected with man, they remind us of God’s sovereign

* Lightfoot and Grotius.

right to bestow all his benefits freely, when, and where, and on whom he pleases. The Nazarenes were ready to say that they had a right to look for miracles being wrought among them, and that they were unfairly dealt with in the preference shown to Capernaum and other places. But Christ would have them to know that they could not with justice put in any claim of right whatever; that God had a title to do what he chose with his own; and that their eye should not be evil because he was good. At the same time, though all favours are ultimately to be referred to the sovereign will of God, it does not follow that he has no good reasons for what he does, or that he does not, for the most part, follow a certain order in his procedure. His providence and his grace are often at work with those whom he means to bless, long before his love to them is obvious to human observation; and as he generally prepares the minds of those whom he is to visit in mercy, so there may be observed, in many cases, such peculiarly flagrant defects and such positive sins, as easily account for his withholding his aid. None can be said to obtain help because they deserve it; but many, in a very strong sense, and all unbelievers, more or less obviously, are denied help because they are unworthy of it. The Spirit of God had already prepared, or was to prepare, the widow of Sarepta and the Syrian captain for the kindness he was to show to them; while it may have been that other widows, and other lepers, nearer to the prophet, were altogether careless and unbelieving. But whatever there may be in this, we have already seen that one reason why Jesus did not many miracles among the Nazarenes was because of their unbelief; and there can be no doubt that they were in this justly punished for their not giving due honour to their illustrious townsman. These two cases were, in this way, a complete scriptural defence of the manner in which Jesus was proceeding. They were also an intimation that God is not confined in his blessings to any particular people, but that in every nation they who fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him. In this way, too, Christ hinted, and by no means obscurely, that he came to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles as well as the glory of his people Israel; and that while obstinate and unbelieving Jews should be left to perish in their sins, all of every kindred and tongue, who received him, should be partakers of the blessings of his salvation.

“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” What a sudden change is this from what we read were their feelings, perhaps a few minutes before, when they all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth! How fickle is the breath of the multitude! and how unstable that happiness which rests only on the applause of men! What now offended the people was our Lord’s intimating that God was sovereign in

the disposal of his favours; that there was obviously good reason, however, for the mode of his procedure in the case to which they objected; and especially, that because of their rejection of salvation, it was to be published and embraced among the Gentiles. The idea of the admission of other nations to the equal enjoyment of the privileges of the reign of Messiah, was what the proud Jews could never endure. Thus, when Paul, in declaring his conversion from the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem, had repeated Christ's words to him: "Depart for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles;" the Jews "gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." This fulfilled the prophecy of Moses, quoted and applied in this way: I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people; and by a foolish nation will I anger you." To such a pitch of frenzy did the iniquitous rage of the Nazarenes now proceed, that they intended to murder Christ, by casting him down from the hill on which their city was built. Wretched people! among whom the Saviour had lived so long, among whom he had grown up, increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Honoured by his residence, and favoured with some of his earliest labours in the ministry, it might have been expected that they would have received with joy the light of life. "But, O blessed Jesus! while thou art preaching these glad tidings of great joy, what a return dost thou find! Thou art ungratefully rejected, thou art impiously assaulted; and had their rage and malice been able to prevail, the joyful sound would have died into empty air as soon as it began, and thus thy first sermon at Nazareth had been thy last.*

"*But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.*" Whether he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, or made himself invisible, or blinded their eyes, or escaped in some other way, we are not told; but there was evidently something miraculous in this. Similar to this was what took place when he was teaching in the temple, as we read in John viii. 59: "Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." His hour not being come, he extricated himself from his enemies at Nazareth, and returned "*to Capernaum,*" where he had been a short time before. Capernaum was a city of considerable importance, situated on the coast of the sea of Galilee, also called the sea of Tiberias, and the lake of Gennesareth. As the city is not mentioned in the Old Testament, it is thought to have been one of those built after the Babylonish captivity. Being a convenient place whence to proceed in other directions, it was more frequently resorted to than any other by our Lord, after the commencement of his public ministry.† In this respect Capernaum was highly honoured, and said by Christ

* Doddridge, *in locum*.

† See Matt iv. 13-16.

himself to be, in point of privileges, "exalted to heaven;" but as it failed to improve these privileges, he declared that it should be "cast down to hell;" intimating probably not only the future condemnation of the impenitent individuals it contained, but also its destruction as a city. Accordingly, from being the capital of all Galilee, it was reduced to a few fishermen's huts, and it is even questionable now where it stood.

When Jesus was in Capernaum, he went on regularly teaching on the Jewish Sabbaths; for the day of public worship and of sacred rest was not changed till after his resurrection. Teaching, or religious instruction, is an employment well suited to the Sabbath, being directly calculated to promote the glory of God and the spiritual good of men. "*And they were astonished at his doctrine;*" struck with the matter and manner of his teaching, though but few of them were converted. "*For his word was with power.*" This may signify that his teaching was confirmed by miracles. It also seems to denote the tone of command, and the personal and divine authority with which he spoke, as in the parallel passage, Mark i. 21: "And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." The same account, you will remember, is given of the effect of his sermon on the mount. And this expression may also signify that, in some few happy cases his preaching was accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost bringing it home with saving efficacy to the conscience. Jesus himself testified: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

In assisting you towards the improvement of this passage, it may be observed,

1. *That no man should be undervalued on account of humble parentage.* "Is not this Joseph's son?"—was thought a formidable objection to Christ; and a similar remark is often considered, by some, enough to lower one who, on account of the most estimable qualities, ought to stand very high in their opinion. If a man behave well himself, even the sins of his parents ought not to be imputed to him as a fault, much less ought their lowly condition in life. Indeed, the greater the obscurity from which a man has emerged, and the more numerous and more formidable the difficulties with which he has had to struggle, the more praise is due to him for arriving at honourable distinction. It is one of the many privileges of our native country that the road to promotion is open to all, and that if he only observe those rules which have been laid down for the security and benefit of the whole, the son of the poorest man in the land may rise to the highest office in the Church under Christ, or in the State under the sovereign. And such cases do actually occur. Instead of always rejoicing, however, others are sometimes displeased at such

events. Men are seldom disposed to be ruled, or to be taught, by those who were once their equals or perhaps their inferiors; and yet why should they not, especially where the qualifications are obviously possessed along with the offices? Let us be ready to acknowledge ability, and to esteem worth, whatever may have been the origin of their possessor. Ignorance and wickedness degrade the man of rank below the level of the commonalty. Knowledge and virtue exalt the plebeian to the rank of the excellent and the honourable of the earth. In connection with this, we may notice how unbecoming it is in a man who has thus risen in life, to be ashamed of his humble parentage, or to undervalue or forget his kindred and his early friends. No man of a truly great or a truly Christian mind can be guilty of this. The Son of Joseph and Mary was also the Son of God, possessed of riches unsearchable, of power almighty, of dignity most illustrious, and of a name which is above every name; but how meekly and gracefully did he wear his honours, and what an example did he show of filial duty and of universal condescension!

2. *We should not neglect the lessons taught in the proverb, No prophet is accepted in his own country, or of his own kindred.* This proverb has arisen from what is generally the fact: we say generally, for it does not hold true universally. There are instances of men's own countrymen, and especially their own kindred, being prejudiced from the first in their favour, manifesting towards them an extraordinary partiality, giving them credit for more excellence than they possess, and hailing them when they come forward in any public capacity, and in particular as prophets, or teachers of religion. Apart, however, from the partial fondness of very near relations, and very kind friends, the proverb states what is the general fact; and the fact may be accounted for, though not altogether justified. The circumstance already noticed, of some such persons getting forward from an obscure condition, and that, too, before the very eyes of those whose prejudices are excited, operates in this way. Intimately connected with this is a spirit of envy at those who are advanced. Men, too, are much under the influence of curiosity, and a desire of novelty. If it be rather too strong to say that familiarity breeds contempt, yet does it diminish somewhat of men's respect for those with whom they have been brought up, and are daily conversant. What comes from a great distance is generally reckoned of great value. Even serious persons are not altogether superior to unfounded prejudices, or uninfluenced by very trifling recollections; and as for unbelieving, and worldly, and profane persons, they are glad of any excuse for neglecting the message which a faithful teacher brings. Such unreasonable feelings bring their own punishment along with them in the loss of edification. The Head of the Church, however, finds out the proper stations for his own servants, when they yield themselves to his guidance; and though not always,

yet most frequently, the chief field of their usefulness has been found to lie at some distance from the spot in which they were born and spent their early years. On the whole, it is desirable that all unfounded prepossessions, whether favourable or unfavourable, should be unknown; that every messenger who brings the pure truth should be welcomed; that measures should be considered rather than men, and doctrines rather than names; and that even the best of teachers should be viewed only as instruments, in order that God may be looked to for the success, and that Christ may be all and in all.

3. From the cases of the widow and Naaman, and from the example of Jesus Christ, we may *infer the sinfulness of objecting to the more extensive diffusion of religious privileges, and of refusing to rejoice in the good of other countries, under the pretence that all our exertions should be limited to our own country.* No doubt, our own friends, and our own vicinity, have the first claim on our benevolence, and must by no means be neglected. Jesus did not neglect Nazareth, and he doubtless would have done much more for it, had it not been for the obstinate prejudices with which he was there beset; but he had compassion also on Capernaum. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the indulgence of any more general philanthropy, if at all of a rational kind, will impede those endeavours which should be made for our own more circumscribed locality. In truth, the principle seems to be, that we ought not to shut our hearts against any call to attend to the spiritual welfare of man; but that in as far as our capabilities extend, we ought to embrace the various likely ways of doing good, as they present themselves. There is a tide in the affairs of men in general, and of the Church in particular,—a tide, not of chance, but of providential influence and arrangement; that tide of favourable circumstances we cannot command; it is our duty, therefore, to avail ourselves of its flow, lest it ebb away, and the opportunity be lost. And as neither at Nazareth, nor at Capernaum, was the ministry of our Lord without some success, so may we hope that no scriptural attempts, whether at a distance, or at our own door, will ultimately prove altogether in vain.

Lastly. *Let us beware of resembling in any way the Nazarenes in their more violent hatred of Christ, and of the truth, here described; and beware also of the causes which led to that hatred.* They at first endeavoured to veil their dislike under the pretence of a desire to have more of Christ's miracles performed among themselves; but this was, in fact, to begin with cavilling at his plans, telling him that he might have done better, and dictating to him how he ought to proceed. Let us be on our guard even against this spirit, which would question the wisdom of any of his arrangements; for he will take his own way, and will not be driven into ours. Not contented, however, with finding fault, the Nazarenes were at last filled with wrath. How awful, if we should be found thus raging, and setting ourselves against the Lord and

his anointed! The potsherd may strive with the potsherds of earth, but woe to him that striveth with his Maker. And what was the chief cause of their wrath? It was Christ's telling them of their unworthiness of gospel blessings, and of God's right to dispense these blessings as he chose, and that as a matter of pure favour: it was the strong view he gave them of the doctrines of human depravity, and of the sovereignty and freedom of divine grace. As those doctrines offended the men of Nazareth, so they ever have offended, and ever will offend, those who are under the influence of pride, and do not submit to the righteousness of God. There is nothing more offensive to men of this turn of mind at the present day than this strain of doctrine; it even fills some of them with wrath, so that they lose their temper, and begin to rage and blaspheme. Thus saith the Lord: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." To this the opposers have various things impiously to object; they even affirm that this doctrine destroys their accountableness, and say: "Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" It is often to no purpose that the words which ought to be enough to silence every modest inquirer, are addressed to such an objector: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Sooner or later, however, every mouth shall be stopped; God will prove, to an assembled universe, the justice of his ways, and put to shame all who have attempted to deny to him the power of doing what he will with his own. Let us, therefore, even now remember that we are all condemned and helpless criminals, and that if salvation come to us at all, it can only come as a gift. Let this teach us to lay aside all claim of right, let it humble us (as it is so admirably calculated to humble us) in the dust before God, and let it lead us to be contented to be indebted to the Lord, to fall in with his own plan of deliverance, and thankfully to accept of his offered mercy. And whereas the exceeding riches of divine grace, and God's mercy to publicans and prodigals, continually excite murmurings among all Pharisees and all formalists, let us ourselves plead as the chief of sinners, and ever rejoice when we see or hear of the Lord's goodness to others, and especially when he makes his way into hearts which seemed more than ordinarily hardened against his gracious influences. As this submission to free grace is the only way of safety, so it is also the only way of holiness and of comfort. We may, indeed, perform outward services, without yielding to the grace of the gospel; but these services will be the mere semblance of what is good—they will be felt as a heavy sacrifice, and be spoiled by a feeling of self-admiration. Let us but yield ourselves, without suspicion and without reserve, to the grace of the Lord, in his own way, and the spirit of the slave and of the mercenary will be changed into the spirit of the freedman and

of the child, and the obedience of the life will be secured as the cheerful homage of the reconciled and grateful heart.

So infatuated were the Nazarenes, as to thrust the Saviour out of their city, with the view of casting him down from the rocks. It is true that such things cannot now, in the literal sense, be anywhere done, or attempted; yet, in the spiritual sense, they may be, and they are. It is the very same spirit which would thrust out the *doctrines* of Christ from any city, or any country. It is truly lamentable to think that there are places into which the light of the Reformation introduced the knowledge and faith of the dignity of the Saviour's person, and the perfection of his work, in which, however, human power has been exerted to put down all the true doctrines of the gospel, in which the faithful heralds of the cross have been persecuted, and from which some who preached Christ have been glad to escape with life. What better were such opposers, most falsely calling themselves Christians, than the enraged men of Nazareth? But let us look nearer home. Let us beware lest by prejudice, or heresy, or unbelief, we thrust out Christ and his doctrines and his salvation from our own hearts. This will be as ruinous to us, as would bidding him (if we literally had it in our power) depart out of our coasts, or as thrusting him out of our city. Let us beware of the proud rejection of his righteousness, and of the crucifying him afresh, and putting him to open shame, by ungodly and worldly lives; for thus we shall more certainly perish than if we had joined in the rush to cast him from the precipice, or had lent a hand in nailing him to the cross.

That we may escape such danger, and partake in the blessings of his grace, let us be anxious that his doctrine, which is still taught us, may not only excite our astonishment, but enlighten and save our souls: and let it be our fervent prayer that to us his word may be published in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. The Lord grant that "the gospel may not come unto us in the word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance:" and may he "fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ," to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

LECTURE XVIII.

LUKE IV. 33-44.

“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34. Saying, let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. 35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. 38. And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. 40. Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was Christ. 42. And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent. 44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.”

THERE have been some who have maintained that the instances of demoniacs, or persons said to be possessed with devils, of whom we read in the New Testament, were not literally possessed, but only spoken of in that way in accommodation to the usual ideas and language of the age, being merely persons in a state of lunacy, or subject to convulsions, or epilepsy, or the like; and this opinion they endeavour to strengthen by the assertions that such possessions were unknown before the time of Christ, and that, as we have no experience of them now, it is unreasonable to believe that any such, in the literal sense, ever existed. In support, however, of the obvious meaning of the scriptural language, and of the commonly received opinion on this subject—from which opinion there is no sufficient reason to depart—it may be remarked, in the first place, that a plain distinction is drawn in Scripture between these possessions and lunacy, and all other diseases. Thus, in Matt. iv. 24: “And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and he healed them.” With regard, again, to the idea of Christ and the evangelists merely accommodating themselves to the notions of the times, it is very derogatory from their character to suppose that they could have expressed themselves in a way which must have confirmed the people in the belief

of a gloomy and superstitious and hurtful opinion, as the one in question must have been, on the supposition of its being false. In various cases, too, the relation is so circumstantial as to be altogether incompatible with the opinion we are combating, and altogether demonstrative of the wish of the writers to be understood literally. Thus, we read of the devils entering into men, and going out of them; of their being spoken to, and of their speaking; of their being questioned, and their answering; of their begging that Christ would not torment them; of their requesting to be allowed to go into the swine, and not to be sent out of the country. These, and such like expressions, must be decisive, unless we are entirely to explain away and use most unwarrantable liberties with Scripture. The incorrectness of the assertion, that instances of possession were not at all known till the time of Christ, has been proved from several ancient writers.* Whatever discredit may have been brought on this subject by the tricks of pretended exorcists, these very pretensions furnish a proof that there have been real possessions—just as false prophets are a proof that real prophets have existed, and as counterfeit coin is a proof that there is genuine coin. There are also very satisfactory reasons why such possessions should have become frequent in the days of the Messiah, and have afterwards become less frequent, till they were at last unknown. The devil had gained a great victory over man, and Christ came, as his great antagonist, to rescue them from his power. This view of the Saviour's work is very frequently given in Scripture; as when it is said that he should bruise the head of the serpent; and that for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. With this intention, it was a wise dispensation to allow the devil, about this time, "to give some unusual proofs of his existence, power, and malice, in thus attacking men's bodies, which would naturally convince them what a dangerous enemy he was to their souls, and what need they had of the patronage of Christ; as the sensible victory of Christ in these dispossessions, would be a proof and specimen of that illustrious and complete triumph over him and his confederate powers in which our Lord's mediatorial kingdom is to end. No kind of miracles, therefore, could be more fit to attest his mission, and to promote his interest among men; and hence it is, that hardly any are more frequently and circumstantially described."† With regard to the continuance and cessation of these possessions, we read, towards the end of Mark, that our Lord, shortly before he left the world, said, that among other signs which should follow them that believe, "in his name they should cast out devils." That many instances of this occurred as long as the gift of miracles continued in the Church, is established on as good evidence as almost any historical fact whatever. And surely the divine wisdom and goodness are conspicuous in this, that

* Josephus, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Plutarch.

† Doddridge.

after the purpose was served, after the miraculous powers were withdrawn, and after the continuance of possessions could no longer serve any desirable end, these possessions ceased; or at least, if the Satanic influence on men's bodies continued at all, it continued in a much less aggravated degree, and so as not to be distinguishable from ordinary and natural trouble. If, after the establishment of Christianity, there can now be traced no visible footsteps of this demoniacal influence, this is an evidence of the truth of our Lord's prediction: "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

But let us notice the particulars of the case of dispossession here described. Our Lord was teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath, where they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power. "*And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean devil,*" or demon, or fallen angel, "*possessing him,*" and miserably afflicting him. The devil might be called an unclean spirit, as distinguished from the Holy Spirit, as being himself sinful and impure, and as seeking to pollute men by his evil suggestions. Whatever may have been the reason which induced the man to repair to the synagogue, when he saw the Saviour, he cried out, or rather the unclean spirit which was in him "*cried out with a loud voice,*" in an agony of anxiety and terror, and as speaking either for himself and the man, or for himself, as one of many fallen spirits, "*Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.*" The Holy One was a well understood name for the Messiah. The demon was aware of the name, character, and Messiahship of Jesus; and he was afraid, for the devils believe and tremble. He was conscious of his ability to contend with him: he knew that he and his fallen angelic associates had, and could have, no interest in a Saviour who had taken on him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and aware that his rebellious confraternity, though some of them might have some liberty granted for a time, were reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day, he trembled lest he should not only be dislodged from his usurped abode, but banished into the regions of darkness. Thus, the demons in possession of the two men coming out from among the tombs, cried out when they met Christ: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" *

However much truth there was in this testimony to his divine character, our Lord would not receive it, but commanded the demon to hold his peace. On no occasion would either Christ or his apostles take any advantage of any such evidence from devils: on the contrary, in every case they immediately silenced and ejected them.† Truth cannot be established by the evidence of known and convicted liars; and the devil was a liar,

* Matt. viii. 29.

† Acts xvi. 16.

and the father of lies. Christ would not have his people to seek truth from such a speaker, lest they should also give heed to his delusions. Christ did not need his testimony, and he would not be imposed on by his correct profession, and his forced though true declaration. He therefore "*rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.*" This word was with divine power. The demon yielded, knowing that resistance was vain. "*When the devil had thrown the man in the midst,*" and, as it is in Mark, * had "torn him, and cried with a loud voice"—that is, had thrown him down and convulsed him—"he came out of him, and hurt him not." Though the devil left him with such noise and rage that the beholders were ready to think that he must have torn him to pieces, yet the cure was complete, for the patient felt no bad effects, and was instantly restored to perfect soundness. No wonder that the people "*were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this!*"—what a powerful, what an irresistible word is this! Or, as in Mark, "What a thing is this! what new doctrine is this?"—"for with authority and power, he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." No wonder that, as connected with the report of this notable miracle, "*the fame of Jesus went out into every place of the country round about.*"

We ought to be thankful that such visible possessions are now unknown. But let it be recollected, with awe and trembling, that many are still spiritually in possession of the evil one. Those who are unbelieving and unrenewed, are habitually under his influence. They may not be able to distinguish that influence from the workings of their own minds, but its existence is unquestionable. All who walk according to the course of this world, walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. The god of this world "blinds the minds of them that believe not." All such are in "the snare of the devil, and taken captive by him at his will." Nor is it only in the haunts of profligacy, and in the ways of the world, that such spiritual demoniacs, as they may be called, are to be found; for, as Jesus Christ met with a man who had a spirit of an unclean devil in the synagogue, so many in the unhappy state which has just been described, may be found in our public assemblies. Let hearers, then, be now jealous of themselves, lest something of the spirit of the demoniac in this passage be, if not expressed in their words, at least lurking in their hearts.

It is beyond a doubt that many, like the unclean spirit, are alarmed when they begin to discover Christ in the synagogue—that is, when the plain truth of his doctrines respecting their state and danger is made to beam on their minds. Many feel, in reference to the preaching of the truth, as if they would say: "Let us alone." Aware of its awakening nature, they either keep out of its reach, or, if within its range, and especially if brought in some considerable degree to be convinced of its im-

* Mark i. 26.

portance, and yet not brought so far as heartily to yield to its influence, they do wish to be let alone. Is not Jesus, speaking by his accredited messenger, then looked on as an enemy to their peace? Is not the faithful monitor then viewed as one who has come to destroy them—to torment them—to cut up their hope by the roots? And is not this so, not only with the profane and the sensual, but also with those whom decent, though not pious habits, have inspired with self-admiration and complacency? But to desire to put away from them the word of Christ, is to desire to put away from them Christ himself: to wish to be let alone in such a state, is infinitely worse than it was for the demoniac in the gospel to wish that Christ might not exert his power to dispossess him. Those who feel in this way, say as it were: “Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits.” They virtually say to Christ: “What have we to do with thee?” They virtually say to the Almighty: “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: what is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” It is truly terrible to think that the sentiments of the unbelieving and impenitent are very much the same, in substance, with those expressed by Satan in this passage.

Well would it be for such persons, could they but see the sin and folly of cherishing such sentiments, and then act accordingly. Christ would not listen to the request of the demon, and it will prove in vain for any of you, my friends, to endeavour to keep the convictions of his word at a distance—to beseech him not to destroy your comfort—to entreat him to let you alone. You may, indeed, appear to have such success for a time; but it will be a fatal success. Sad will be the judgment if he shall grant you your request, give you up to your own hearts' desires, and say of you: “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.” In vain probably, however, will be your attempt to maintain through life your desired tranquillity—the tranquillity of a heart that shuts out the light, keeps Christ out of view, defies every warning; and having hardened itself against all that is terrible and all that is endearing, rests in a state of guilt, contented and secure. Suppose, however, you were to succeed in this, and continue in this state as long as you live, this would be the most tremendous curse that could befall you; it would be far worse than immediate death, with its consequent immediate condemnation, because it would be the occasion of your treasuring up additional wrath against the day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Realize to yourselves, also, the moment when you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; and think what would be your situation should you then be saying to him: “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to torment and destroy us? let us alone.” As you would wish to avoid shame and confusion *then*, do not cherish this truly diabolical

spirit *now*. Jesus is now present in the midst of you, as he teaches from his Word in our synagogue. He comes to you, he comes close to you in the preaching of his gospel, in the salutary warnings of his Word, and in the proffers of his richest mercy. Do you not perceive that though a visit from him give you pain, nothing but a visit from him can give you peace? Will any one of you, then, by contempt of him or by indifference to him, say: "Let me alone; what have I to do with thee? art thou come to torment me?" Rather say: "Lord, teach me to love thy presence, Lord, help me to form an intimate and saving connection with thee, and to delight in making an unreserved surrender of myself to thy perfect righteousness and thy blessed will. Lord, enable me to submit my soul to thy hand, not as to the hand of an unfeeling tormentor, but as to the skilful and tender hand of an infallible physician and faithful friend. Lord, rescue me from the thralldom under which I groan, and from the pollution in which I lie. Lord, expel this unclean spirit from my heart, and vindicate for me the glorious liberty of the children of God!"

But let us proceed to consider the next miracle here recorded.

After this signal triumph over Satan, our Lord "*arose out of,*" or arose and left "*the synagogue,*" accompanied by his disciples, "*and entered into the house of Simon,*" that is, Peter, or, as we read in the parallel passage of Mark, "into the house of Simon and Andrew," for they, being brethren, appear to have lived together. In this visit, we see the gracious condescension of him who was King of kings and Lord of lords; and we mark the high honour conferred on the apostle. As if it had been with the intention of leaving a permanent ground for the refutation of the Popish doctrine concerning the celibacy of the clergy, the Spirit of God hath caused it to be recorded that the apostle Peter was a married man, and, as appears from his kindly lodging his aged mother-in-law in his house, a pattern of affection as a husband, and of dutifulness as a son.* His intimacy with Jesus did not preserve his household from trouble. His "*wife's mother*" was seized with a violent "*fever,*" and was confined to bed, and dangerously ill. Either the gift of miracles was not yet bestowed on the apostles; or they could not exercise it on every occasion; or they would not exercise it, except when especially moved to it by the Holy Spirit. Peter, therefore, could not, or at least did not attempt to heal his mother-in-law. It would, no doubt, be felt by her, if she was capable of reflection, as an aggravation of her affliction that she was detained by it on the Sabbath, and at a time too when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. There being, however, as it would appear, some person, or persons, left in the house to take proper care of her, Peter had gone to the synagogue, and having seen and heard what passed there, had remained, with the view of asking Christ to accompany him home to heal his mother-in-

* See 1 Cor. ix.

law; if, indeed, our Lord did not rather anticipate his desire. However this may have been, Jesus was no sooner entered into the house than they told him of her, and “*besought him for her,*” —entreated him to exert his power, and to heal her. Ever ready to do good, he entered the apartment where she lay, and standing near to her bed, he, in a majestic manner, “*rebuked the fever,*” he commanded it away with a word’s speaking, “*and it*” instantly “*left her.*” Mark says that “he came, and took her by the hand and lifted her up.” The cure being without natural means, instantaneous and complete, was evidently miraculous, and was as evidently shown, by the circumstances of the case, to have been effected by Christ. It is added: “*And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them;*” she waited on Christ and the other inmates of the house, in the active discharge of domestic offices. In this she, though probably unintentionally, proved the reality, the completeness, and the miraculous nature of her cure. She did not continue in bed, nor did she merely join the company and remain motionless, nor did the least debility remain, but she manifested health and strength in vigorous action. In this, too, she manifested her humility; for, instead of being elated with the honour conferred on her, she showed herself ready to perform the humblest offices. In this also she manifested her gratitude and affection to her friends who assisted her and interceded for her in the time of her trouble; and especially to that glorious Benefactor who had raised her from a bed of sickness, and who had delivered her soul from death, her eyes from tears, and her feet from falling, and caused her to walk before him in the land of the living.

Fever, of various kinds, is one of the most common, and one of the most fatal, diseases. It attacks persons of every age and condition. Often from the very first its symptoms are alarming; and often, though mild in its commencement, it increases to violence. When it has seized on a person, no man can say what will be its issue: whenever it sets in, therefore, it is right that it should be considered as demanding attention, as a solemn memento of frailty and mortality, and as an urgent call to lay to heart the things which belong to our everlasting peace. When any of our relations are sick, we ought to get what human help to them we can; and, as the friends of Peter’s wife’s mother did, we should apply to Christ in their behalf, and beseech him for them. But are there not some present who have themselves been restored from fever, and other painful and dangerous diseases? We know there are. It is your duty, then, to acknowledge the divine goodness in your restoration. It was the Lord who directed to and blessed the use of the means, if visible means were known to be useful, or who rebuked your disease himself, if no means were particularly noticeable as salutary. You are as much indebted to the Lord, as if a miraculous interposition had taken place in your favour. See, then, that you give him the glory, and that habitually. How sinful, if, after

having "poured out prayers when his chastening was upon you," and after having experienced his great goodness, you have forgotten all, and have returned to carelessness and folly! How different from this pious woman, who arose and ministered to Christ! But this part of your history speaks to whatever is generous in your feelings. The great Physician had delivered you from restlessness, and pain, and tossings, and perhaps from delirium and frenzy. Having strengthened you on a bed of languishing, and made all your bed in your sickness, and having, it may be, spoken peace, as you thought, to your souls, he has rebuked your fever; he has eased the laboriousness of your respiration, and allayed your thirst, and assuaged the tumult in your veins, and wiped away your tears, and raised you up from a bed of languishing, and turned darkness into light in your dwellings, and changed the melancholy and scarcely audible whisperings of your family into the voice of joy and gladness, and led you forth to breathe the open air of heaven, and restored you to your friends, and to the business of life, and to the edifying and delightful services of his sanctuary. Does not such kindness speak to your hearts? and if there be a spark of gratitude, or true religion, or aught that is ingenuous within you, does it not fan it into a flame? and does it not constrain you to say: "What shall I render unto the Lord for his benefits?" Rest not satisfied, however, with making your acknowledgment in words. Now that Christ has raised you up, see that you minister unto him, and to his cause and people. If no opportunities for such service occurred, yet would true gratitude lead you to exert a sacred ingenuity to contrive opportunities. There are many things, however, that you may do for them; there are many inviting and urgent calls on every hand. Do, then, whatever your abilities and situation permit: and study to live to him through whose great kindness it is that you live at all.

Having thus particularly described two of our Lord's miracles, with their accompanying circumstances, the evangelist proceeds to state, in general terms, the vast variety and number of cures which he performed. At even of the same Sabbath, and "*when the sun was setting*," at which hour the Jewish Sabbath, strictly speaking, was at an end, they being directed to keep it from sunset to sunset,* "*all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them to Christ*," probably many of them on their beds and couches, which they scrupled to carry at an earlier hour; "*and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them*." He received them in the most gracious manner, and without the use of any natural means, he perfectly and instantly restored them all, however aggravated and inveterate their complaints. This brought such a crowd of people together, that Mark says: "All the city was gathered together at the door," some appearing as humble supplicants for themselves, or their friends, and others as astonished spectators of the wonders which were performing.

* Lev. xxiii. 32.

In words also, which, after the observations already made on one particular case of the same nature, do not seem to require any explanation, Luke adds, that "*devils came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was Christ.*"

Thus laboriously, for the glory of his Father, and for the benefit of men, did Jesus spend this Sabbath. Nor did its fatigues prevent him from improving the succeeding morning, nor its duties seem to him a reason why he might be forgetful of divine things on other days of the week. "*When it was day*" (Mark says: "In the morning, rising up a great while before day") "*he departed and went into a desert place.*" Mark says expressly: "He there prayed." We have here the usual example of our Lord in favour of secret prayer; nay, we are here taught, that rather than not have proper leisure for this duty, we should rise very early; and we are also reminded, that if we have had a good Sabbath we should be the more earnest in prayer next morning, lest the good impression wear off.* But "*the people sought him, and came to him, and stayed him*"—endeavoured to prevent him from departing from Capernaum. They were not like those of Nazareth, who thrust him out of their city; there is reason, however, to fear that many of them sought to detain him rather from a desire to derive temporal benefit and amusement from his miracles, than from a desire to profit by his heavenly doctrine. But though not driven out, he went away, with the view of more extensive usefulness; his object being to diffuse as widely as possible the knowledge of his salvation. "*He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities also; for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.*"

We have already noticed the leading practical lessons which may be gathered from these verses, considered separately. There remains, however, one important subject, which is suggested by the general bearing of the passage, namely, *the nature, evidence, and use of miracles*; and it may be the more natural to advert to this subject briefly, in the conclusion of this lecture, as this is the first passage in the Gospel of Luke which brings the subject fairly before us. A miracle may be defined, An extraordinary work, in which the interposition of divine power is clear and indisputable. Or it may be defined, in a still more strictly theological sense, An operation of God beyond the ordinary course of nature, for the purpose of attesting a communication from him. But it is difficult to produce a definition beyond exception, on a subject which has peculiarly called forth the casuistry of sceptical men. Like almost every thing else, however, of importance, it is level to the capacity of every man of common sense; and however the caviller may twist, and perplex, and obscure the language and the philosophy, the simple cannot

* Scott.

err as to the substance of the thing. To restore to reason and comfort the frantic demoniac, to recover from a fever, to heal various diseases, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, to make the lame to walk, to cleanse the leper, and to raise the dead ; to do all this with a word, or a look, or a touch, completely, instantaneously, and in every case where the attempt was made—every unsophisticated mind sees at once that these are real miracles, and demonstrative of the finger of God. Nor would it ever occur to the unsophisticated mind but that such events were possible with God, and even probable, on the supposition of his wishing to accredit any one as a divine messenger, and capable of proof in the same way as any other events. It is true that men are naturally inclined to require very satisfactory evidence for very remarkable events ; but it is not too much to affirm that in the evidence by which the truth of these events is supported, there occurs such a coincidence of circumstances as is unparalleled, and as renders the evidence as extraordinary as the events themselves. The miraculous events in question were such as could be judged of by the senses ; they were performed, not in a corner, but before multitudes, not once, but many times, not among those only who were already enlisted on the Christian side, but among others of various classes strongly opposed to that side. They were recorded, not at a distance from the country in which they are said to have happened, but on the very spot ; not ages after, but while the generation yet existed who had witnessed them, and when, of course, had there really been any imposition, it might easily, and would certainly, have been detected. The very enemies of Christ did not dispute the reality of his miracles at the time, but only ascribed them to Satan. They were actually believed at the time by all, and if they had not been credited then, it would not have been possible to establish the faith of them afterwards. The disciples who, though not the only, are the chief witnesses whose evidence is recorded, were sensible men, and not likely to be imposed on ; and they were cautious men, who were brought with some difficulty to espouse the gospel. They were men of most exemplary character, who would not have forged lies. Having actually witnessed these events, they hesitated not to declare them abroad. Their testimony to them was the road, not to ease and preferment, and wealth and honour, but to disgrace and confiscation of goods, and every trial to which human nature could be exposed ; to that testimony, however, they adhered, in defiance of imprisonment, banishment, tortures, and death. That these events took place, then, is established by all the evidence of which the case admits. And these events are recorded for our instruction in Scripture, by four historians.

They are recorded, too, as connected with a most important subject, namely, the truth of the Christian religion, and its consequent claim on our reception. “ The works that I do,” said

Jesus, "bear witness of me. If ye believe not me, believe me for the works' sake." Now, let us not think, my brethren, that we have done all that is proper, when we have allowed these miracles to be a proof of the truth of Christianity in general; but let us draw nearer, and look at that Christianity itself, and carefully study its doctrines, every one of which is proved by these miracles, as well as the leading fact of the divine mission of Christ. We shall entirely lose our labour, if, as is not uncommon, we content ourselves with examining the outworks, and repairing this bulwark, mighty though it be, of the Christian citadel, and do not also become acquainted with the nature and comply with the arrangements of the interior. When Nicodemus said to Christ: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"—our Lord immediately availed himself of the general acknowledgment to lead Nicodemus on to the two most essential points in the Gospel itself, namely, regeneration, and the way of pardon; intimating, by the connection in which these points were introduced, that Nicodemus, on his own principles, was bound to receive Christ's instructions on these particular topics, and to be affected accordingly. He said to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is thus that, in humble imitation of that divine Teacher, we would now beseech you to follow up the general conclusion to which the argument from miracles unquestionably leads. Remembering that as mere miracles never converted any who beheld them, so still less can the mere relation of miracles convert men now, do you, however, rightly attend to the scriptural views, the nature and connection of which we have now shortly stated; for these, and such as these, are the views which, it may be hoped, will, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, be made effectual for producing in you that belief of the truth which will cause you to put off the old man, and to put on the new man, and which will introduce you into, or confirm you in, the happy state of those who, being justified by faith, have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE XIX.

LUKE V. 1-11.

" And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, 2. And saw two ships standing by the lake : but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4. Now, when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5. And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. 6. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. 7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him "

THIS appears to be a more full description of the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, than is given by the foregoing evangelists. The accounts given by Matthew in his 4th chapter, from the 18th verse, and by Mark in his 1st chapter, from the 16th verse, correspond very closely with each other. It is true, that they differ considerably from the account by Luke, which we have now read, as in some less important circumstances, so especially in their saying that these fishermen " were casting a net into the sea;" whereas Luke says, that they had " gone out of the ship, and were washing their nets." But all these circumstances may have taken place immediately following each other. If we may suppose that the former historians intended merely to state, in a general way, the calling of these fishermen to follow Christ, and that Luke intended to relate the circumstances more at large, interweaving, at the same time, the account of the miraculous draught of fishes, which they entirely omitted, the variation of circumstances is exactly what might have been expected; and such variety, without contradiction, shows that there is no studied uniformity in the evangelists, and that all their histories are true. Though Andrew is not expressly mentioned in this account, there is no reason to doubt of his having been present.

Our Lord was now standing "*by the lake of Gennesaret.*" This lake is called in the Old Testament,* Chinnereth, or Chinneroth.

* Numb. xxxiv. 11; Josh. xii. 3.

The New Testament writers have given it three different names—the sea of Galilee, from the province of Galilee in general; the sea, or lake, of Tiberias, from a city of that name which stood on its western shore; and the lake of Gennesareth, from a particular tract of Galilee which bounded it on the western side. It was a large collection of fresh water, being, according to Josephus,* 40 furlongs broad, and 100 furlongs long. The river Jordan runs through the midst of it, and it is stored with a variety of excellent fish. It was a common saying among the Jews, that “God loved the sea of Galilee more than any other sea:” on which saying a Christian cannot but feel disposed to remark, that it was at least more honoured than any other sea by the frequent presence of the beloved Son of God, who was borne upon its bosom, and who taught on its shores.

Our Lord’s teaching and miracles had, by this time, excited a strong desire to see and hear him. Multitudes, indeed, thronged to him, greater than any house could hold. On the shores of the lake, however, there was abundant space, and there “*The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God.*” It is always a pleasing sight to see multitudes thronging to hear the word of God. No doubt, the pleasure is often damped by the fear that many will prove but idle and unprofitable hearers, and that only a remnant will be saved. Still it is well, in so far, that they come within the reach of the means; and it is a great honour and a high privilege to have an opportunity of addressing multitudes, especially when a spirit of inquiry has gone abroad among them, and when there is more than an ordinary desire to listen. On such occasions, extraordinary exertions ought to be made to instruct them. Then almost every day is seasonable, and almost every place proper. On such an occasion, when the people were pressing on Christ, and when, though all of them wished to get near him, very few of them, owing to the levelness of the sand, could either see or hear him, he adopted the following singular expedient:—

“*He saw two ships,*” of the size and construction of which vessels used for fishing on that lake may be supposed to have been, “*standing by the lake of Gennesaret;*” that is, probably, aground close by the side of the lake; “*but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s.*” It appears from Matthew and Mark, that Simon Peter was at this time accompanied by his brother Andrew. It appears, too, from the 1st chapter of John, that these men had before this time formed an acquaintance with Jesus on the banks of Jordan; after that, they seem to have been called his disciples, and occasionally to have attended on him. They continued, however, as yet, for the most part, to follow their usual occupation as fishermen. Having entered into Peter’s ship, Jesus requested him “*to thrust out a little from the land;*” which request being readily complied with,

* De Bello, iii. 10.

Christ "*sat down*," as he frequently did when preaching, "*and taught the people out of the ship*." Other circumstances in the history of Jesus, prove that there were times when the situation he now chose would have been altogether unfit for his purpose. The lake was subject to violent storms, during one of which the ship would have been in danger of being dashed to pieces, and the sound of the human voice would have been lost in the roaring of the waves. At this time, however, the sea of Galilee must have been slumbering in peace. Now its smooth surface reflected every object as in a mirror; the bark that bore the Saviour floated motionless on its bosom: the buzzing of the multitude had ceased, as they were conveniently drawn up on the land; all was stillness and silence, except, perchance, that amidst the stillness and silence, there might be seen and heard what would add greatly to the beauty and sublimity of the whole, a very slight rippling of the waters, as they met the shelving shore; the tempered elements and the listening throng owned the presence and waited for the voice of their Lord. What an audience, what a temple, what a pulpit, and what a preacher were here! Here, however, as on many other occasions, we are merely told that Christ taught the people, and are not told what he taught. We can only, therefore, suppose, in general, that he instructed them in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel of the kingdom, while they bore him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

Sermon being ended, the multitude, we may suppose, dispersed, though it is likely that part of them would still linger by the shore, to watch the motions of Christ, and would thus witness the astonishing miracle which he was soon to perform. When Christ "*had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught*;" which command, though the men had laboured all night without success, was readily complied with. "*When they had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake*." Having, however, made signs to their companions who were in the other ship, they, with their help, succeeded in securing the fishes, with which they loaded both the ships, till they drew so much water that they were ready to sink. This wonderful draught is not to be accounted for on ordinary principles. When the total failure during the night, the immense quantity now taken, and the astonishment of Peter who was no novice in this employment, are considered, this draught of fishes must be viewed as miraculous. This was, unquestionably, the immediate work of him who is the Lord of the sea and of the dry land. This, therefore, like his other miracles, was a proof of his divine mission, and, of course, of the truth of the doctrines he had been teaching. This was a demonstration that he was indeed the Son of man, to whom, in the highest sense, belonged the dominion over "*the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas*." By this

miracle, too, our Lord rewarded these disciples for their diligent attendance on his ministry, and ready regard to his accommodation. This miracle may also have been intended as an emblem and pledge of the success which these disciples were afterwards to have in the great work of the ministry.

We are told that "*when Simon Peter saw*" this miracle, "*he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" A sense of the immediate presence of God himself, or of a messenger from God, has generally filled the mind with alarm. At the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, even Moses said: "I exceedingly fear and quake." When Gideon perceived that it was an angel of the Lord who had appeared to him, "Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord." The widow of Zarephath said to Elijah: "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" Somewhat similar was the conduct of Peter on the present occasion, on which he showed at once humility and imperfection. There was here much humility; for Peter's thoughts turned inwards on himself; he felt and he expressed his own unworthiness, and he acknowledged that his unworthiness might justly provoke the Lord to destroy him. Under the influence of such feelings, and of overpowering astonishment, he entreated the Lord to depart from him; and here was manifested his ignorance. He ought rather to have besought him not to forsake him, but to abide by him, and to save him. There is no reason, however, to suppose that Peter was now influenced by any such spirit as led the devils to say: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" or as led the Gergesenes to beseech him to depart out of their coasts, or as lead sinners, every day, virtually to say to God: "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Our Lord, accordingly, was graciously pleased to overlook his ignorance and timidity, and to acknowledge his humility. So it is that the Lord always turns away from the proud, but never from the contrite and trembling.

Nor was Peter singular in his astonishment on this occasion; for "*all who were with him*" in his own ship, were astonished "*at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners*" in the trade "*with Simon.*"

Our Lord kindly dissipated the apprehensions of Peter with his usual cheering words, "*Fear not.*" Indeed, none who bewail their unworthiness, and have admiring views of his glory, have any thing to fear from him. The more effectually to dispel Peter's fear, Christ informed him of the high honour he intended for him, in the ministerial office, to which he was to be immediately called: "*From henceforth thou shalt catch*" or captivate "*men.*" It is worthy of remark, that the word* here rendered

* ζῳγενῶν vivos capiens. Τον Κεῖσεν ἰζωγενῶν. Ἀστυαγὼς ἰζωγενῶν. Herodotus.

“catch,” signifies, not to take in order to destroy, but to take in order to preserve alive. It signifies, in short, to gain souls to God—to secure them for him—to succeed in the great object of the gospel ministry. Considered in reference to Peter personally, these words were gloriously fulfilled in his success, especially on the day of Pentecost, when he might be said, in the spiritual sense of the word, to have taken a miraculous draught. The words are, however, more or less fulfilled in the labours of all whom the great Head of the Church commissions to preach his word.

Luke concludes this part of the evangelical history, by saying, that “*when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Christ.*” Matthew* supplies this information, that they took this step in consequence of an express command. Jesus “saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” He called them to follow him constantly, in order to their being fully prepared for the apostleship, on which they were soon to enter. And the call, being accompanied with divine power, was effectual. They felt that his authority and his kindness equally demanded their services: and they willingly gave up every thing for his sake. Nor was the sacrifice small to them, although it may appear trifling in the eyes of some. Whatever it was they gave up, they could give up no more; for they forsook *all*, and followed him.

Let us now proceed to notice more particularly, and to improve some of the leading ideas suggested by this passage.

1. *The rank of life from which Jesus Christ chose the men who were to be the chief ministers of his religion*, is worthy of particular notice. The same power which drew off these simple men from their nets and their laborious occupation, could, with equal ease, have drawn off the rich and mighty from their wealth and luxury, and enlisted the learned in the cause: and, to human wisdom, it may appear that such celebrated persons would have been the proper instruments for Christ’s purpose. We see, however, that his ministers were, in general, of lowly station; and yet we at the same time know that their instructions and influence far surpassed those of the most learned and powerful men the world had ever seen. Principles were disseminated by fishermen and tent-makers, which, from the very first, excited the admiration of many, and which, in the process of time, effected a complete revolution in the religious sentiments of the civilized world. In this the Lord humbled the pride of man, and made his own glory peculiarly illustrious. “God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence: and that he that glorieth should

* Matt. iv. 19

glory in the Lord." Does not this choice afford an irrefragable argument for the divine origin of the gospel? for, whence had such men such things? could they have invented so admirable a system? is there any way of accounting for the wisdom with which they spoke, but on the supposition that they were divinely inspired? Viewing, too, this choice in connection with the splendid success which Christianity soon obtained, is it not plain that that success arose, not from human power, or wealth, or learning, but from the force of truth, from the effect of miracles, and from the accompanying influences of the Holy Ghost? Let us, then, beware of neglecting any thing which they have delivered, and let us receive with full confidence and steady obedience that Gospel which they preached and wrote, knowing, as we do, that our faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

2. *Let us mark the honour here put on honest industry.* Our Lord conferred all this honour, not on persons who were leading an idle and useless life, but on persons who had been toiling all night in the prosecution of their business. Now, though we ought to guard against a worldly and covetous mind, and to be most anxious for spiritual blessings, yet duty requires us to be, from a regard to the will of God, diligent in the proper duties of our station and profession in life. We must endeavour to be at once diligent in business and fervent in the service of the Lord. If we proceed in this way, however humble our employment, Christ will accept us in it, and will not disdain to visit us in it, and to bless us in it. Moses, David, Amos, and the shepherds of Bethlehem, had gracious manifestations while they were employed in tending their flocks. Gideon was threshing wheat when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." It was at the plough that Elijah, as he passed by, found Elisha, and threw his mantle over him. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom when he was called to follow Christ.

3. We learn from this passage that *the success of human industry depends on the blessing of Providence.* We have here read of men toiling all night and catching nothing, and yet, as soon as Providence favoured, crowned with abundant success. Now, though it is true that well-directed exertions have a tendency to success, and are often, perhaps generally, successful—for the wise man says: "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," and "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men;" yet this success does not always accompany diligence; on the contrary, according to the same inspired authority, "the race is not" always "to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill." In fact, it is to the will of God that success is to be ultimately referred. "Promotion neither cometh from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is judge: he

putteth down one, and setteth up another." This should teach us, in all our lawful pursuits, that though we should be diligent, we should entertain an habitual sense of our entire dependence on God, and look up to him by prayer for a blessing, beseeching him to establish the work of our hands. Hence, too, if we are successful, this should teach us not to make gods of ourselves, by placing ourselves and our own exertions in the room of providence and of the divine blessing—not to sacrifice to our own net and burn incense to our own drag—not to forget the Lord God, and to be lifted up in our heart and to say: Our own power, the might of our own hand, hath gotten us this wealth, this honour, this promotion; but to feel that God has prospered us, and with our lips, and in our lives, to give him the praise. And hence, if, after every exertion, we are unsuccessful, we should, instead of murmuring, cheerfully acquiesce in the divine appointment, believing that our heavenly Father is no less kind in denying than in bestowing temporal favours, and being thankful that there are blessings of a higher nature, which, if we diligently seek, we shall infallibly obtain.

4. There is here *an encouraging example of implicit and persevering obedience to the divine commandment.* Though the disciples had toiled all the night, and caught nothing, yet at Christ's word they let down the net. They knew, whatever might be their success, it was their duty to proceed; they probably had a lively hope that the endeavour would be blessed; and the event proved that their ready obedience was not in vain. On this we remark that, though men's honest exertions may have hitherto been altogether, or in a great measure, unsuccessful, they are not therefore hastily to abandon their callings, and they are by no means to give way to indolence and despair. Let no man begin to say to himself: "I see it is all in vain; every thing that I have tried has failed; I will therefore cease to struggle any longer, and I will give way to that hard destiny which I cannot control, or rather, I will no longer contend with providence, which is so plainly against me." However many his disappointments may have been, and however dark may be his prospects as to the future, let not the unsuccessful man add sin to his trial, but let him continue to exert himself as he can; for while he is thus employed in the discharge of duty, his mind will be borne up, and he is in the way in which he may expect the providence of God will yet assist him, and conduct him, though not perhaps to affluence, yet to what is needful, nay, to all that is really good for him.

This example also admits, naturally enough, of being applied to men's endeavours after the bread of life, after spiritual good, after prosperity of soul. If they desire this, they must be found in the way of duty, they must cheerfully and perseveringly attend to the ordinances of God's appointment. It is not very uncommon to meet with a person who, unbosoming himself on the subject of his experience, with feelings of grief and disap-

pointment, and almost of despair, expresses himself somewhat as follows: "You speak of the value and the blessedness of gospel grace, and I believe it to be more valuable and more blessed than can be described, and I think there is nothing which I would not cheerfully undergo to be possessed of it. You tell me also of the connection between asking and receiving, seeking and finding; and you urge me to attend to the outward channels of the Word and other ordinances through which this grace is communicated, and to apply to God by prayer that he would put his Spirit within me, and enrich me with all the blessings of his salvation. But you forget that I am already familiar with all these things, and yet still a stranger to their power. I have been long engaged in these ordinances without effect. I am like the disciples who toiled all the night, but caught nothing. You speak of my searching the Scriptures, and I do so, but they are a sealed book to me; of the promises, but they are not to me; of prayer, but I have prayed long, if prayer it can be called, and am not heard; of the power of God accompanying a preached gospel, but I am hardened under it. Therefore, I had as well cease to labour in this way, there being no appearance, no probability, I would almost say no possibility, of my success." We do not stop to inquire whether on the soul which is thus affected there may not be already an impression made, which though very obscure, is yet indelible, and which will be yet brought forward into the full resemblance and full blessedness of the divine image; but, as reminded by the example before us, we urge on such persons the necessity of going on in their search after spiritual good, the necessity, too, of their close reflection, in order that the misapprehensions which partially darken the glory of divine truth, may be cleared up, and of their endeavouring, by the help of God, to give implicit credit to his testimony. And to this procedure we would encourage them by the animating promises of success which are made to all who persevere in labouring for the meat that endureth to eternal life. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

5. There is here much *instruction to ministers, in their employment being compared to that of fishermen*. If, indeed, we were to overstrain the comparison by seeking for the resemblance in too minute particulars, we should render it ridiculous; there are, however, a few general points of resemblance, which are very natural and striking. In another place, our Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away: so shall it be at the end of the world." Doubtless, every kind of imposition, every thing jesuitical and deceitful, is utterly unworthy of the gospel; yet does this way

of representing the office of ministers, by saying that they shall catch, or captivate, teach that they ought to exercise a holy ingenuity; to proceed with all prudence, and to adopt every scriptural and honourable method, in order to gain men to God. Solomon says: "He that winneth souls is wise." To effect, as instruments in the hand of God, this blessed purpose, requires true wisdom and a happy dexterity. They should endeavour to captivate, to win men, by informing their understanding—by urgent persuasions—by exhibiting, in the most engaging light, the love of God in Christ, the beauty of holiness, and the happiness of heaven, by the attractive influence of a good example, and by earnest prayer, addressed to the throne of grace in their behalf. As the employment of the fisherman is one of great labour, so the minister is called on to be diligent and laborious. He is to be "instant in season and out of season; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." He is to watch in all things, to endure afflictions, to do the work of an evangelist, to make full proof of his ministry. As nothing but the blessing of Providence can give success to the toils of the fisherman, so nothing but the blessing of the Spirit of grace can give success to the labours of the minister. When the minister is unsuccessful, he ought, indeed, to inquire whether the fault do not lie, in a great measure, with himself; whether there be not something in his doctrine, or life, or temper, which prevents his usefulness; and whether he be not neglecting means which would probably be efficacious. Still, however, whether planting or watering, he must remember that in himself he is nothing, and that it is God who giveth the increase. Moreover, when success is delayed, when he has toiled many a dark hour and caught nothing, though he cannot but be grieved, he must not be so discouraged as to give over work, but he must still be ready, at the command of his Master, to let down the net; he must still persevere in earnestly plying men with all the most moving considerations he can propose. If he thus persevere, some effect of his work will at last be seen, nay, it may be that, after the example of the success of the fishermen on the sea of Galilee, the Lord may, by a single sermon, or at least in a short space of time, give him success so obvious, so decided, and so extensive, as will be more than sufficient to counterbalance all his former labours and disappointments. Let him thus continue to labour, at the same time preserving a single eye to the glory of his Master, fishing not for temporal preferment, or for human applause, but for souls, ever ready to obey the word of his Lord, and, free from selfishness and jealousy, looking on other faithful labourers not as rivals, but as helpers and partners; and then it will be seen that his ministrations will not be in vain.

Lastly, we learn from the conclusion of this passage, *the necessity of forsaking all in order to follow Christ*. Though immediately addressed to the persons here mentioned, and peculiarly

applicable to ministers, the call to leave all for Christ must be complied with by every one who would be saved by him. Thus our Lord says, in the 14th chapter of Luke, from the 26th verse : " If any man come to me, and hate not," comparatively, so as not to love so much as me, " his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." The time has frequently been when the sacrifice of property, and friends, and liberty, and life, the sacrifice of all that is dear to flesh and blood, was required in the literal sense : and the grace of God has enabled many to make the sacrifice. It is not likely, my friends, that you will be called on to make any such sacrifices to any great extent in the literal sense ; but it is absolutely necessary that you rise to that spirit which will lead you to renounce every thing which would keep you from following Christ. While you ought to be ready literally to part with all for his sake, should circumstances require you to do so, you must even now actually forsake every thing which stands in the way of your hearty surrender and obedience to him. You must forsake sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. You must forsake ungodly companions, coming out and separating yourselves from the wicked. You must forsake all trust in your own righteousness, casting yourselves entirely on the mercy of God, by faith in the merits of his Son, and following him as the Lamb slain for the remission of your sins. Nay, though you may literally retain, you must spiritually forsake, and be denied in the frame of your minds to things lawful in themselves. Your hearts must be withdrawn from your worldly possessions, so that you must not seek your happiness in them, nor consider them essential to it ; and, as these disciples left their nets at the very time when they had greater success than they ever had before, so you must be particularly watchful over yourselves in the time of great prosperity. When riches increase, set not your hearts upon them. You must remember, too, the rule which Christ lays down as to your friends, and even them you must forsake for him, should duty require you. Not that, in ordinary cases, you must literally leave or break off intercourse with irreligious and careless friends, but you must break off from their practices which your superior light teaches you to condemn ; you must be so far superior to their influence, as not to suffer them to detain you from professing and obeying the truth ; and while you endeavour to bring them along with you in the paths of genuine Christianity, you must, whether successful with them or not, at all events make a point of following Christ yourselves.

To this course we exhort you, not as to a course which will involve you in unavailing trouble and painful mortification, but as to a course on which, if you do enter, you will never repent

LECTURE XIX.

that you have entered. You may thus appear to lose something, but you will thus certainly gain much more. When Peter said to Jesus: * "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee," he replied: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." Be persuaded, then, to forsake all for Christ, and to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. Thus, though you should even appear to lose all, you will in reality find all: for you will find Christ in every thing, and every thing in Christ. You will find safety, and holiness, and peace, and joy, now in the faith, and at last in the vision, of Him who hath said: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

* Luke xviii. 28.

LECTURE XX.

LUKE V. 12-15.

“And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.”

THE leprosy is a disease which, thanks to God! is hardly known in this country, except by description. It is a disagreeable, cutaneous disorder, appearing in dry white scales, either over the whole body, or over some parts of it. It is said to be of two kinds—that of the Greeks, which is called *impetigo*, and to which we need not more particularly advert; and that of the Arabians, which prevailed among the Jews, and which, from the swelling which it occasions in the limbs, and from the inequalities and roughness it produces on the skin, causing an appearance somewhat like that of the skin of the elephant, is called *elephantiasis*. It is attended with a violent itching and pain. The affection is generally slight and partial at first, but soon becomes worse and spreads. In process of time, it causes the skin to turn black, and eats away the flesh to the very bones, which are themselves affected. The body falls away, but the extremities swell, so as to hide the fingers and toes. At last fever comes on, to which the miserable patient falls an easy victim.* There are some cases recorded, however, in which the disease seems to have been much more mild; thus, when it is said that Uzziah was a leper unto the day of his death,† it would appear that he had lived a considerable time under its mitigated influence. Pliny says that it was not known in Italy till the time of Pompey the Great, and that it came from Egypt. It was at one time common in Africa; and it has been also, at times, frequent in the West Indies, and especially in Barbadoes, not only among the negroes, but also among the white inhabitants.

Persons in Old Testament times were sometimes suddenly struck with this disease, by the hand of God, in consequence of some particular offence: and the disease on this account came to be generally regarded as a mark of the divine displeasure. Thus,‡ when Miriam joined Aaron in speaking against Moses,

* Calmet and Celsus.

† 2 King xv. 5.

‡ Numb. xii.

“the anger of the Lord was kindled against her, and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron said unto Moses, Alas! my lord, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed.” When Gehazi* had transgressed by covetousness and lying, Elisha said to him: “The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And Gehazi went out from his presence a leper, as white as snow.” So also, † when king Uzziah’s heart was lifted up so that he presumed to usurp the priest’s office, by going into the temple to burn incense, it came to pass that while he was wroth with the priests who endeavoured to dissuade him, the “leprosy rose up in his forehead, and they thrust him out, yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.”

Though not in all cases incurable, yet in inveterate cases leprosy appears to have been incurable by ordinary means; and certainly where it was sent immediately by the hand of God, nothing but the immediate agency of the same hand could remove it. When Naaman was sent by the king of Syria to the king of Israel, the king of Israel exclaimed, “Am I a god, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?”

Did time permit, it would be useful to read the 13th and 14th chapters of Leviticus, which contain a full account of the procedure divinely appointed in reference to this terrible infliction: you may peruse these chapters at your leisure. In the meantime, the following particulars are too important to be overlooked. It appears, then, throughout, that leprosy was peculiarly selected from among all other diseases, and that it was in fact treated, not as a disease but as an uncleanness. When a suspicion arose that any person was infected with it, he was immediately to be brought to the priest, who, after the most careful examination, and after time given for the symptoms to manifest more decidedly the nature of the complaint, was solemnly to pronounce him clean or unclean, according as the case might be. If pronounced unclean, he was to manifest every token of grief and humiliation. “The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.” It was enacted, too, that all the days during which the plague was upon him, he should be looked upon as defiled, and dwell alone, without the camp, and afterwards without the city. He was thus removed, to save others from infection, and to mark the displeasure of God. His case was then truly pitiable, he being cut off from many of the comforts of life, and from the tabernacle, or temple, and the public service of God. This rule was rigidly enforced, without respect of persons: for Moses’ sister was shut out from the camp during the seven days that the leprosy was upon her; and we

* 2 Kings v. 27.

† 2 Chron. xxvi. 16.

read that "Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several, or separate, house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord." Shut out from the society of others, lepers sometimes associated in companies together, without the gates of cities, as appears from what we read of the four lepers who were in the neighbourhood of Samaria when Benhadad besieged it, and of the ten lepers whom Christ met and cured as he was entering into a certain village.

According to the law, the management of the whole case was committed to the priest, and he was not directed to use any natural means for the cure of the leper, but was minutely told how to proceed in the ceremonial of his cleansing. When the plague of leprosy was healed, which is to be considered as having been effected by the power of God, the priest was to go out to the man, and to direct two live clean birds to be taken, the one of which was to be killed (as it is expressed) "in an earthen vessel, over running water," which seems to be a transplacing of words, and signifies that they were to put some water taken from a stream into an earthen vessel, over which they were then to kill one of the birds, so that some of its blood should fall into the vessel, which would then contain blood and water mixed. The other bird was to be tied alive, together with a bunch of hyssop, on a stick of cedar-wood, with a scarlet thread, and then dipped into the vessel already mentioned. The mixture of blood and water which the bird and hyssop, like a wisp, would take up, was to be sprinkled seven times on the man, who was then to be pronounced clean; and the living bird was to be let loose into the open field to join its mates, in token of the man being delivered from the bondage of his plague, and at liberty to join the society of his fellow-men. After his coming into the camp, several other ceremonies were enjoined on him, particularly that of his washing his clothes and body. When the appointed time came for his appearing before God at the tabernacle, or temple, the priest was to offer sacrifices of atonement and thanksgiving for him, with two he-lambs, and one ewe-lamb. The priest was to apply, with his finger, a little of the blood of the trespass-offering to the tip of the man's right ear, and to the thumb of his right hand, and to the great toe of his right foot; and after that, he was also to apply a little of the oil, which always accompanied sacrifices, to the same places, above the blood—places which may have been chosen to represent the whole body, or, as some, interpreting the ceremony more closely, suppose, to signify that he was now at liberty to hear God's word with his ear, to touch men without defiling them with his hands, and to walk whithersoever he chose with his feet. If the leper was too poor to be able to provide what was generally enjoined, a gracious provision was made whereby he might furnish acceptable offerings at a cheaper rate.

Such was the disease of leprosy, and such the ordinances with regard to it: these being kept in remembrance, we shall

be the more able to enter into the case which this part of the Gospel history places before us, and to perceive how naturally it suggests considerations of the highest importance to our own spiritual welfare.

This miracle is also related by Matthew in his 8th, and by Mark in his 1st chapter, and all the three evangelists state nearly the same circumstances. Matthew says that it happened "when Christ," or after Christ "had come down from the mountain" on which he had been preaching. It does not appear what city is intended. *It came to pass,* says Luke, *"that when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy."* If the leper was really in the city, it was a transgression of a divine law for him to be there, and for the rulers to suffer him. All, however, that may be intended, may be that Jesus met him in the environs of the city. Or, Jesus may have, from within the gate, seen the man without, and have gone to him. The man was not only leprous, but full of leprosy; the case was a very aggravated one, and if he should obtain relief, his deliverance would be the more striking. From the harmony of the three evangelists, we learn that the poor man seeing Jesus, came close to him, and first kneeling down, then fell on his face, or prostrated himself on the ground, at Jesus' feet, and worshipped him; thus manifesting deep humility, and offering profound adoration to him whom all men are commanded to honour even as they honour the Father. Holy men and angels always declined such worship, but Jesus the Son of God, who was one with the Father, always accepted of it, and made it a gracious return.

In this humble and reverential posture, the leper "*besought Christ, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" The man, in these words, expressed his firm conviction of Christ's *ability* to heal him. The report of his miracles and doctrine, if he had not himself been an eye-witness and an ear-witness of them, had convinced him of the divine mission, and probably even of the Messiahship, and consequently of the divine power, of Jesus. It was an unquestionable truth that he, the Mighty God, was able to perform that cure, and even to do all things; and the declaration now made by the leper was, in so far, becoming and commendable. With regard to the words, "If thou wilt," the conclusion, drawn by most who have carefully considered the whole passage, and especially the gracious answer the leper received, is, that they were not intended to express a sinful doubt, far less an absolute unbelief of Christ's willingness to help him, but rather to signify his complete submission to the Saviour, and his entirely casting himself on his good-will. This was, in fact, an earnest and believing, though very humble, supplication for help; and it soon received a most gracious answer. The compassionate Redeemer, who was ever ready to help those who applied to him, overlooked the weakness of the poor man's faith. "*He put forth his hand and touched him.*" The Holy One could receive no pollution from such a touch as brought

with it healing. As he touched him, he said: "*I will,*" I am willing, or, I will that it shall be so; "*be thou clean.*" His touch and word, as on every other occasion, were accompanied with divine power: "*and immediately the leprosy departed*" from the man. Universal and inveterate as his disease was, he was instantaneously and perfectly restored.

Our Lord "*charged him to tell no man*" of his cure. In this our Lord wished to avoid ostentation. He wished, also, not to attract too much notice, or to give unnecessary alarm to the rulers, as his hour was not yet come. In this, also, he was probably desirous to counteract the malice of the priests, who if they had first of all heard that Christ had performed such a cure, might, out of opposition to him, have denied its reality. If, however, its reality were first of all acknowledged by the priests by the offerings they presented on account of it, they could hardly have the assurance to deny it afterwards. Thus, had the man imposed silence on himself for a short time, he would soon after have been at liberty to declare the whole truth, when the effect of his declaration would likely have been more powerful. "*Tell no man; but go and show thyself to the priest.*" Christ having been made under the law, and this man being a Jew, and the law being yet in full force, it "*behoved Christ to fulfil all its righteousness:*" he therefore acted here on his usual principle of observing the legal ceremonies. We already noticed, from Leviticus, that the man who was to be cleansed was to be brought to the priest, to whom the conducting of the whole business was referred; and after the sketch already given of what was done on all such occasions, we need say nothing now on what was intended by our Lord when he directed this leper, whom he had cured, "*to offer for his cleansing according as Moses commanded.*" Christ ordered him to go to the priest, and present his offerings, "*for a testimony unto them.*" It being the business of the priest to pronounce the man clean, or unclean, his pronouncing him clean, and offering the sacrifices for him, would be a testimony, or public declaration to all, that the cure had indeed been performed. This, taken in connection with the tracing of the cure to Jesus, which would soon take place, would also be a testimony that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And this would be a testimony that he was indeed the expected Messiah—a conclusion which we ourselves should now draw from the well-authenticated relation of this miracle. When the Baptist's messengers came to Jesus asking: "*Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*" in that same hour Jesus performed various miracles before their eyes, and then said to them: "*Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*"

Instead of obeying our Lord's prudent injunction of secrecy for a time, the man, as Mark tells us, "*went out and began to*

publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter." This disobedience cannot be justified; for duty requires implicit compliance with every part of the divine will. There were, however, some circumstances which, to a certain extent, may have palliated this conduct. He may never have reflected on the reasons which led to the prohibition. Judging it to have arisen solely from modesty, he may have thought that it would have been ungrateful in him not to give publicly the glory where it was due; and he may, on account of the great mercy vouchsafed to him, have found it next to impossible to check his ardour, or to restrain the expression of his feelings. It may be hoped, therefore, that his rashness was forgiven. It was, however, productive of much inconvenience; for, as Mark says, the people began to throng to Christ "insomuch that he could no more openly enter into the city," but was under the necessity of being much "without in desert places." It was impossible, indeed, that one who wrought such wonders could long be hid. The more he endeavoured to conceal them, "*so much the more*," according to Luke, "*went there a fame abroad of him; and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him of their infirmities.*" His meekness and prudence prevented, in a great degree, the bad consequences which might have been apprehended from such crowds; and his grace and power took occasion to bring good out of the evil, by healing multitudes of their bodily distempers, and savingly instructing some in the knowledge of the kingdom of God. This inconvenient crowding to Christ proves to us how expedient it was that he should go away, and send the Comforter. Had his bodily presence still continued on earth, it could only have been in one place at one time, and men would have crowded to him from every quarter in vast multitudes, very few of whom would have been able to get near him; whereas, by his spiritual presence, he is ever nigh to those who seek him now, and he will continue to be with his people in all places, and at all times, even unto the end of the world.

Let us now proceed to consider this subject in the most important light in which it can be contemplated, namely, as *giving an emblematical representation of our own sinfulness, and of the method of our own spiritual purification.*

The leprosy, though not, strictly speaking, a moral pollution, was yet a ceremonial uncleanness of the very worst kind; though not sin, it was the consequence of sin, not merely as every other disease, or natural evil, is the consequence of sin, but as it was often inflicted by God, obviously for some particular offences: and when its symptoms, and the mode in which those who were smitten with it were treated under the law, are considered, a great number of points of resemblance are found between it and its cure, and sin and salvation. The analogy is too complete, and too striking, to be accidental; it is obviously of God; and the Word of God justifies us in our attempt to trace it. Leprosy

in its general aspect, was a striking emblem of a state of sin. It was eminently a state of uncleanness, and *sin is a pollution of the soul*. Those who are in a state of guilt and depravity have those things proceeding out of their heart which defile the man. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but their very mind and conscience are defiled." Of all such it may be said: "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in them; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

The analogy holds also in many minute particulars. As the leper was shut out from the congregation, and compelled to dwell apart; so *reigning sin shuts out* from all fellowship with God, and from all right to the sealing ordinances of religion. The procedure with regard to the leper teaches, that on account of scandalous sin, transgressors ought to be authoritatively cast out for a time, not indeed from the means which may convert, or restore them, but from the communion of the Church. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," said the apostle to the Corinthians. Such transgressors are to be kept out while they continue impenitent; but should they repent and be healed, they are to be again admitted. "Sufficient to such a man" (said the apostle concerning the penitent offender already mentioned) "is this punishment. So that now, on the contrary, ye ought to forgive him," and "confirm your love towards him." Sin persevered in also excludes from entering within the gates of the new Jerusalem. We are assured that "no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" and that there shall in no wise enter into the celestial city "any thing that defileth." The lepers being removed, too, partly to avoid the infecting of others, this reminds us of *the infectious nature of sin*, and of the danger of familiar intercourse with those who are under it. Were unbelieving and impenitent sinners sensible of their own dismal state, and actuated by any degree of benevolence, instead of seeking to entice others to go with them, they would warn them to stand afar off. As this, however, can hardly be expected, we ought at least to beware of them, to shun them, to withdraw from those who walk disorderly, to have no fellowship with their unfruitful works of darkness, to come out from among them and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing."

We noticed the great care that was taken to ascertain whether the individual suspected of leprosy was clean or unclean; and this may remind us that it is a work of great importance, and of some difficulty, *to judge what our spiritual state is*. There can be no doubt, indeed, that we are all born leprous, or sinners, and there is no doubt that some are born again, and cleansed; but it becomes us all to consider what our own state now really is. Those lepers who gave out that they were healed, had still

to be examined whether they were so indeed ; and this was done by the priest. So it is here. And inquirers into this may be assisted by ministers ; or rather, the Word of God explained by ministers, in consistency with itself, is the great touchstone. The Word of God rightly applied, separates the precious from the vile, and is, as it were, the key which opens and shuts the door of the kingdom of God. And as the priest often found sores which did not prove to be leprous ; so it is here. There are none free from sores of sin, of one kind or another : but in some, these sores are neither deep nor of the worst kind ; these sores are faults, no doubt, which they ought to bewail, and from which they ought to seek deliverance, but they are not leprous, or not so to any dangerous degree—that is, they are not of the aggravated nature which betokens a state of condemnation, and general prevalence of iniquity. As the lepers, however, even after they were healed, were directed to wash themselves and their clothes, and to go through other ceremonies ; so those who are pardoned must still give all diligence to go on in actual improvement of character, and to “ cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.”

From the leper's humiliation, again, we learn the *necessity of being convinced of sin, and of humbling ourselves before God*. Let us, when we think on what we are, and what we have done, rend, not indeed our garments, but our hearts, and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags : and we all do fade as a leaf : and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

As no natural means were appointed for the healing of the leper, so let us remember that *God alone can heal us of our disease of sin*. All other physicians are, in this respect, physicians of no value. He himself graciously declares : “I am the Lord that healeth thee ;” to him, therefore, ought every one of us to apply, saying, with the Psalmist : “Lord, be merciful unto me ; heal my soul ; for I have sinned against thee.”

Further, the various ceremonial institutions to be observed by lepers in general, and the application and success of this leper in particular, teach us *to look for deliverance from the leprosy of sin, through the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The blood of typical sacrifices was shed for the cleansing of the lepers, and the blood of the real sacrifice was shed for our sins on the cross. Without blood-shedding there could have been no remission for us ; but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. It cleanses, as the atonement received by faith is the means of forgiveness, and also of bringing that truth to bear on the mind which is effectual to destroy the power of sin. Thus, by the death of Christ, a fountain was opened for sin and for uncleanness. But as it was a mixture of blood and water which was sprinkled upon the leper, and as some of the oil, as well as of the blood, of the other sacrifice, was applied to the different parts of his

body; so we are taught to look to be cleansed from sin, not only by the blood, but also by the Spirit of Christ, of whose influences the water and the oil were emblems. The Spirit, too, works chiefly by means of the blood—that is, by the great truth of the atonement—when he takes of the things of Christ and shows them to men. These influences were thus promised: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.” This cleansing through Christ, and by the Spirit, was experienced by the believing Corinthians, of whom the apostle, after describing their awful state of natural impurity, says: “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” None have any interest in Christ, who have not the influences of the Spirit: and none need pretend to be possessed of the influences of the Spirit, who do not rest their hope on Christ. All who are pardoned are also regenerated. In connection with this, the meaning of that passage in 1 John v. is plain: “This is he that came,” and we may add, who still comes for the salvation of his people, “by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” This great truth was emblematically taught, when from our Lord’s side, on its being pierced with the soldier’s spear, there issued forth both blood and water. And the same truth is also taught by the united view of the baptismal water, and the communion cup. As the blood and water, and the oil, behoved to be actually applied to the leper, so must Christ’s blood and Spirit be actually received by us. The great receiving, or applying grace, is faith, for which we ought to study and to pray. In this way, and keeping all this in mind, we should look up to God, and say, as did David: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Again, from the temper of mind in which the leper approached and addressed Jesus Christ, we are reminded of the importance of a full persuasion that he is indeed *able* to save us. He *can* make us clean. “He travels in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save.” All conceivable qualifications centre in him; particularly, infinite wisdom, infinite merit, and infinite power. As God and man united, he saves by his sufferings, and saves by his strength. His atoning death was followed by his glorious resurrection and ascension; and “he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Assuredly he is able to heal our spiritual leprosy, be it ever so extensive, and deep, and inveterate.

Nor is it less essential, that we should be fully persuaded of his *willingness* to save us. It is true that if we applied to him

only for a bodily cure, or for any temporal blessing, we might entertain some doubt whether he would be willing to grant what we requested. In all such cases we have the promise of attaining what we ask only in so far as it shall be for God's glory, and our own good; and therefore, in these cases, we may very properly ask with the condition, "Lord, if thou wilt;" and knowing that whether the answer be exactly what we may wish, or not, it will be in the main a gracious answer, we may well say: "Thy will be done." With regard to spiritual blessings, however, the blessings of salvation, the case is quite otherwise. The promise here is express to all who apply to him in the appointed way; and therefore, we need not, and unless we would disparage his love and question his faithfulness, we must not, entertain any doubt of his willingness to save us. What additional evidence of this beyond what he has furnished can we possibly require? Has he not left the glory of his Father for us? has he not submitted to poverty and reproach for us? has he not suffered and died for us? has he not proved his willingness by the actual salvation of multitudes? did he ever reject any that applied to him? does he not show himself willing, by the appointment of so many ordinances for our good? did he not condescend to touch and to heal this wretched leper? does not he thus show that he will not abhor any suppliant, however unclean? and does he not invite us to come to him for healing, encouraging us by the assurance that those who come unto him, he will in no wise cast out? Why, then, should we not believe, with equal confidence, both his ability and his willingness to save?

And, my brethren, let us recollect the absolute necessity of admitting all this in reference to *ourselves*, and applying it to our own case: for what impression can it have on us to admit, in the general, Christ to be a powerful and a willing Saviour, if we do not see how the admission bears on our own interest? "Lord, if thou wilt," said the leper, "thou canst make *me* clean." The general fact will, indeed, be found by us to include our own case, as soon as it is correctly understood, and really believed by us. May the Lord enable us so to understand, and so to believe. Nay, Christ is not only willing to save us, but he has already actually done every thing that has any meritorious efficacy to save us. The blood and the water are both ready to be applied. The remedy is at hand, if we only take it. If we continue unclean, it is not because of any unwillingness in Christ to cleanse us, but because we ourselves are not willing to be cleansed. The want of will is in us, and not in him. "Ye will not come unto me," says he, "that ye may have life."* May the Lord himself make us willing in the day of his power. May he bring us all heartily to consent to what he proposes to do for us. May he work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, even the work of faith with power.

* John v. 40.

Now, my friends, you are either spiritually leprous, or a cure has been performed on you. *Think well of your condition, ye who are under the guilt and dominion of sin.* Your bodies may present no appearance but that of health, strength, activity, purity, and agreeableness; but your souls are covered over with a worse plague than leprosy, with the odious and disgusting defilement of sin, so that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, cannot look on you but with abhorrence. This representation is very far from being complimentary, but it is scriptural and correct; and therefore, it is proper that you should be called on to consider it. If you would look at yourselves in the glass of God's Word, you would, no doubt, behold such a reflection of impurity, deformity, and witheredness, as would startle you and shock you; but you would probably be thereby led to consider how your mental state and appearance might be improved. When will you become as solicitous for spiritual as you are for bodily health and comeliness? These, no doubt, are much to be valued in the body, but are they not of still higher importance in the soul? for what can it avail you to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, when the interior is foul, or to become like whitened sepulchres, which are beautiful outside, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness? Be persuaded, then, to imitate the conduct of the leper recorded in this passage. Apply to Jesus Christ. Kneel down to him; fall on your face before him; worship him, and beseech him to have mercy on you. Apply in the full confidence both of his ability and of his willingness to make you clean; for why should you doubt his word, confirmed, as it is, by so many palpable proofs? Cry to him, every one of you for himself: cry humbly, earnestly, and believingly, "Unclean, unclean; Jesus, master, have mercy on me!—Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean:"—cry thus, and he will speak the kind, efficacious word, "I will; be thou clean."

Those of you, finally, who are already happily healed and cleansed of the leprosy of sin, have here much to learn. Cleansed and made partakers of salvation by blood and water—that is, justified through faith in the atonement, and regenerated by the influences of the Holy Spirit—your situation is truly blessed. Be at once thankful and humble. Punctually observe all the commands of your Deliverer, even though you may not always perceive the reasons on which they are founded. Never boast of what you are, or of what you have done; never seek to blaze abroad your own praise. Nay, when he appears to command you to hold your peace, be altogether silent. Do not speak in any way of your privileges, when there is reason to think that it would irritate, or excite ridicule, and do harm. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Copy the example of the Psalmist, who said: "I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is

before me. I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred." Do not run, however, into the other extreme. As there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak. There is no positive and perpetual command on you, as was on the leper, to the effect of—"See that you tell no man." There is no reason whatever for perpetual concealment. On the contrary, in many circumstances, you are at liberty, nay, you are called on by Jesus Christ himself, to open up your mind fully. This will be your duty always when it is calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of others. "Come," said the Psalmist, "and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." "Go home to thy friends," said our Lord to the man out of whom he had cast the legion of devils, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." It may be of use, too, to show yourselves to the priest; that is, to consult your minister, or your teacher, who may be supposed both able and willing to encourage and strengthen you, and to whom such communications ought surely to be very delightful and interesting. You learn also, from the direction given to the cleansed leper, that you ought to rejoice to go up to the house of God to offer the sacrifices of grateful thanksgiving; and also that, being cleansed, it is your duty and privilege to come within the camp, to associate with the Church in full, frequent, and intimate communion. Though you may be truly said to be healed of your leprosy, so that it will never prevail over you, yet you will find that you will be subject to partial attacks of it. Be on your guard, then, against all exciting causes; and be studious to keep yourselves clean. Be in the constant use, too, of the same remedy of the sacred blood and water which proved so effectual at first. In this way, your spiritual health and purity will be constantly improving; and Christ, who loved you and gave himself for you, will sanctify and cleanse you with the washing of water by the word, and will at last present you to himself as a part of his glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

LECTURE XXI.

LUKE V. 16-26.

" And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. 17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. 18. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. 19. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. 20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. 21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? 22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? 23. Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? 24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house. 25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day."

THE evangelist has just been telling how the miracles and discourses of Christ had attracted great crowds, and how he went on laboriously and graciously in his public work. "Great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities." In connection with this the evangelist adds that Jesus "*withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*"* In like manner, after miraculously feeding the five thousand, when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.† "The urgency of his work was a reason with him, not for restraining secret prayer, but for abounding in it. As Christ himself, even when crowds of admirers were flocking to him, and numerous calls were making on his exertions, still kept up secret intercourse with his father, let this teach those who fill important public stations, resolutely to command time for private devotion, and to remember that, the more arduous their labours, the greater the necessity is there for their drawing down succour by ardent prayer, that they may be strengthened and prospered in them."‡ In this, however, our Lord sets an edifying example to all his followers. Did he need private devotion? much more do they. They have all some errands at the throne of grace which he had not, such as, to make confession of sin, and to implore deliverance from its guilt and power. Let them, then,

* *ὁ δὲ ἀποχωρεῖν, καὶ προσευχόμενος.* He frequently withdrew and prayed;—this was his custom.

† Matt. xiv. 23.

‡ Doddridge.

often copy the example he has set ; and let them be encouraged to this by the expectation, that whether it be in a wilderness, or on a mountain, or in their closet, that they pray to their heavenly Father, he that seeth in secret will reward them openly.

Soon after this season of placid retirement, our Lord was found engaged in the busy and trying scenes of his public ministry. "*It came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by.*" As this is the first time that mention is made by Luke of the *Pharisees*, it may be proper to give a short account of them. The Pharisees were the most popular and most numerous sect among the Jews. Their origin is not exactly ascertained. Their name is generally considered as derived from a Hebrew word which signifies "separation ;" and they appear to have assumed the name, as affecting to separate, or distinguish themselves from others, by more than ordinary strictness. It is evident that, at the time of Christ's appearance on earth, they were in high reputation with the people, because of their supposed superiority in knowledge and sanctity. It is as evident, however, that they were in general far from being what they pretended to be. It is true they fasted often, and made long prayers, and were scrupulously observant of the ceremonial law, and gave alms to the poor ; but all this was generally from a spirit of pride and self-righteousness. They wore broader phylacteries, or borders to their garments, than were usual ; they refined, beyond all reason, on the way in which the Sabbath should be observed, objecting to the performance on it of works of necessity and mercy ; but throughout they were marked by insincerity. While they built the tombs of dead prophets, they persecuted the living. While they strained at a gnat, they swallowed a camel. They made void the Word of God, by the traditions of the ancients, and by many inventions of their own : when they pretended to adhere to Scripture, they perverted it by false interpretations ; and, by an endless variety of trifling observances, they rendered religion a heavy and insupportable burden. In some respects, indeed, they held sounder opinions than the Sadducees ; as, for example, on the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, and the existence of angels : and there were, no doubt, men of real piety among them, but these were the exceptions to the general rule. Our Lord speaks of them, as a body, in a very unfavourable way, comparing them to whitened sepulchres, which were beautiful outside, but within were full of corruption ; and describing them as men who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. When we think of their character, let us beware of resembling its many blemishes. Let us hold all scriptural doctrines and institutions, and such alone ; let us humble ourselves before God, and rest solely on his mercy ; and let us, from a spirit of faith and love, serve God in the duties of piety and morality, with simplicity and godly sincerity.

With Pharisees are here joined *doctors of the law*. These were

the same who were also called scribes and lawyers.* A scribe signifies properly "a writer," one who can write readily; and as this art appears in ancient times to have been possessed but by few, the employment of a writer, or scribe, or secretary, was one of great trust and importance, both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs. The scribes were of the tribe of Levi. They were educated in the school of the prophets; and they actually were, or at least were supposed to be, men of considerable learning. Hence they not only transcribed the law, or Old Testament Scriptures, and wrote deeds, but were the acknowledged and authorized readers and doctors—that is, teachers or expounders of the law. It appears, however, that they came at last greatly to abuse their trust. They departed at once from purity of doctrine and purity of life; and they were often included in the censures our Lord pronounced on the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, ye scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!—Verily I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Such men as these, most needing a reformation, were the most averse from it, and were therefore habitually found opposing Christ by all means in their power. Some of both classes had now met, probably by mutual appointment, "*out of every town of Galilee and Judea,*" and especially from "*Jerusalem;*" that they had met with the view, as the sequel shows, of finding something of which to make a handle against our Lord. Notwithstanding this, he proceeded, as usual, in his work: and it is said, "*The power of the Lord was present to heal them;*" that is, was actually exerted: for our Lord never wanted divine power. According to the most usual grammatical construction, this would imply that he healed the Pharisees and doctors of the law: from the journeys, however, which they had made, and from the temper which they displayed, it is plain that they neither stood in need of healing, nor had faith to be healed. This is therefore one of the passages in which, as grammarians express it, the relative "*them*" is to be referred, not to the nearest, but to a remote antecedent; and here even that antecedent is not expressed, but understood.† The meaning is, that he healed those of the people present at his "*teaching,*" who needed, and sought to be healed.

Luke then proceeds to give an account of one of these cures in particular, namely, that of the man healed of the palsy. This miracle is also recorded in the 9th chapter of Matthew, and in the 2d chapter of Mark. Matthew says the miracle was performed in Christ's "*own city;*" Mark says expressly that it was in Capernaum. Bethlehem was the city of Christ's birth; Nazareth was the city where he was educated; but Capernaum was the city in which he now chiefly resided. On a certain day, probably not a Sabbath-day, he was in Capernaum. Mark

* Compare Matt. xxii. 35, and Mark xii. 28. † See Matt. xi. 1, xii. 9; Luke v. 30.

says, that when "it was noised abroad that he was in the house, straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them." "*And behold,*" says Luke, "*men brought in a bed a man who was taken with a palsy.*" The helpless state to which this melancholy disease in a moment reduces even the strongest, is too well known to need any description. The case here mentioned was a very aggravated one. It appears, from the other evangelists, that the man was totally disabled, and was carried by four men upon a bed, or couch. In this, they acted kindly and commendably. "*They sought means,*" or endeavoured, "*to bring him in, and to lay him before Christ;*" hoping, no doubt, that the afflicting spectacle would excite his pity, and call forth the exercise of his healing power.

"*And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling with his couch, into the midst, before Jesus.*" In those Eastern countries the houses were almost always constructed with flat roofs. The inhabitants were much accustomed to go upon the roofs for various purposes; and this, in a fine climate, and in fine weather, would be very agreeable. We read of David walking in the evening upon the roof of his house.* Rahab "brought up the two spies to the roof of her house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof." "There were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport." At the feast of tabernacles, described in the Book of Nehemiah, "the people made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house." "Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house." They went up to the house-tops to make lamentation.† They "worshipped the host of heaven on house-tops."‡ They seemed to have proclaimed things from the roofs of houses: on which custom may have been founded the saying, "That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops." And what is very pleasing to remark, they sometimes went on the roofs of their houses for the purpose of real devotion: "Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour." As the roofs were so much frequented, it was wisely enacted by the law, that they should be provided with battlements, or balustrades: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."§ There were two ways of getting on the roof—the one, which seems to have been almost universal, by a lattice, or trap-door, from the upper part of the house from within; and the other, which seems to have been frequent, by steps on the outside. The houses were not very high; few being more than two storeys, and most only one.

* 2 Sam. xi. 2; Josh. ii. 6; Judg. xvi. 27; 1 Sam. ix. 25. † Jer. xlviii. 38.
‡ Zeph. i. 5. § Deut. xxii. 8; see also Matt. xxiv. 17.

In this case, being unable, because of the crowd, to obtain admission into the house by the door, the bearers of the palsied man made their way by the steps, or by some other expedient, from the outside to the roof, and there opened up the lattice, or window, or rather trap-door, already referred to: but the opening through it being rather too small to allow the couch to pass, they enlarged it by removing, no doubt with care, some of the tiles; and they thus lowered down the couch, with the palsied man on it, "*into the midst*" of the apartment where Jesus was. Some think, however, that the occurrence may be better explained by supposing that the house had an open square area, or court, in the middle, where Jesus was teaching, and that the men lowered the couch from the roof into that area.* The former idea, however, is the more common, and is more naturally suggested by the descriptions of the evangelists. Thus, though the method pursued by these bearers showed their very great anxiety to bring the poor man into the presence of the Saviour, it was not so extraordinary as to appear unnatural, or extravagant, or rude.

Having made good their point so far as to place the man before Christ, though they spoke not a word, the action spoke for them, and the helplessness of the man was itself an eloquent though silent appeal. "*When Jesus saw,*" both in the sentiments of their minds, and in the manifestation of their proceedings, "*their faith*"—the faith of them all—of the paralytic, as well as of his bearers; and especially when he saw that the paralytic himself had faith to be healed, not only of the disease of palsy, but of the disease of sin, "*he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*" The other two evangelists tell us that Jesus addressed him by the appellation of "son." Son was an endearing title given by a superior to any inferior, though not a son in the literal sense; as father was a general title of respect. Our Lord might use both the words "man" and "son," as we find in the Acts of the apostles, "men and fathers," and "men and brethren." He also bade him "be of good cheer." Instead of instantly restoring him to bodily strength, he began with what was most important, namely, spiritual healing, and said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." No doubt these words implied that his bodily disease was to be removed: but it would be most unwarrantable to confine them to that meaning; indeed it would be absurd, for the bodily cure was afterwards performed to prove the forgiveness of his sins, whereas the limitation in question would make the one and the same circumstance the proof of itself. Unquestionably the poor man's sins were now actually all pardoned. Christ's word was with power; in pronouncing, he bestowed absolution; and the paralytic must have experienced the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." This mode of procedure was calculated to remind

* Shaw's Travels.

the paralytic, and all who were present at the time, and all who should ever read this account to latest generations, that sin is the cause of all pains and diseases; that such bitter fruits should lead to reflect on the exceeding bitterness of the root; that it is true wisdom to be more concerned to be delivered from sin than from disease; that if men be first freed from guilt, they will be freed from all suffering in due time; that health of body is but an insufficient good when the soul is left under the power of disease; and that recovery from sickness is a great blessing indeed, when the way is prepared for it by the forgiveness of sin. Greatly may he rejoice, whose experience enables him to bless the Lord who hath first forgiven all his iniquities, and then healed all his diseases. Well might Hezekiah say, on his recovery: "O Lord, thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day."

This most gracious saying and deed of Christ immediately excited the malevolence of the scribes and Pharisees who were present: they "*began to reason, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God alone?*" The principle on which they reasoned was correct. Nay, it is of the first importance that the principle should be carefully considered. It is against God that sin is committed, and it is God only who has the power to forgive it. This he repeatedly asserts as his own prerogative. He proclaims himself "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;" and he says: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—"It is God that justifieth." It were well that this truth were attended to by all who bear the Christian name: if it were, men would no longer be found deluding themselves by imagining they had received absolution from priests. It is true that our Lord said to the apostles: "Whose sins soever ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose sins soever ye retain, they are retained." But, from the express passages declaring that it is God only who can forgive sin, it is plain that the meaning of these words is, that the apostles were to declare, in a general way, in what manner sin was to be forgiven, and what were the state and evidences of those who were forgiven. Having in many cases, indeed, the gift of discerning spirits, the apostles could, in these cases, do what none can now do—positively know and pronounce as to the state of individuals. It is of little avail for the defenders of Papal delusion, to say that their priests do not pretend to pardon sins, strictly speaking, themselves: for they do speak in a way which leads the ignorant to believe otherwise; and they cannot deny that their priests hold out assurances that they will

procure pardon for sinners, and actually take it upon them to pronounce absolution on transgressors, not generally, and provided they have received the gospel, but individually and positively. All this is nearly as bad in its effects of blinding men to the true scriptural doctrine of pardon, as if no attempt were made to explain away and palliate the absurdity at all. Let us ever remember, that "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness;" and let us also feel contented, nay, anxious, that he should exercise his own prerogative in his own way.

The principle on which the scribes and Pharisees reasoned was just, but the inference they attempted to deduce from it was false. As God can only forgive sin, it is blasphemy in any creature to pretend to forgive it; but it was not blasphemy in Christ to claim this power; because he was God. Our Lord, however, did not go into any verbal proof of this: at the same time, he took the most satisfactory method (if any thing could have satisfied such cavillers) of establishing the dignity of his character, and his power to forgive sin, namely, the method of proof by miracle. Now, it is in vain to pretend, as the opposers of our Lord's divinity do, that we might as well infer from the miracles performed by the apostles that they were possessed of divine perfections, and had the power to forgive sin: for, in the first place, they were careful to disclaim all merit and power of their own, and to perform their miracles in the name of Christ;* and secondly, they never taught that they had the power to forgive sin, and therefore their miracles could be no proof of any such doctrine. But Jesus Christ performed miracles in his own name, and taught the doctrine that he had power to forgive sins; of the truth of which doctrine his miracles were, of course, a demonstration. On this occasion, then, he condescended to bring the question to trial in the following manner: There was a man before them disabled by palsy: if Christ did not with a word restore him, they were at liberty to pronounce Christ a deceiver; but if he did, then they were bound to acknowledge him to be possessed of power to forgive sin—to be, in short, Messiah, the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us. And the question was soon settled.

Though the objectors did not speak out, but only cherished their objections inwardly, or at the most hinted them to one another in whispers, Jesus, who knew what was in man, and needed not any one to inform him, was quite aware of what was going on. "*When he perceived their thoughts, he answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is it easier, to say,*" with effect to such a helpless creature as this, "*Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?*" Do not both require divine power? and if I have power of myself to say the latter effectually, may I not also say the former? "*But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth,*" even in his state of humiliation, "*to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the*

* Acts ix. 34.

palsy,) *I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.*" The command was accompanied with divine power. Believing the word of the Lord, and feeling himself strengthened, the paralytic "*immediately rose up*" in the presence of all, "*and took up that,*" the couch, "*whereon he lay.*" He carried it away, showing that he was completely restored. "*He departed to his own house,*" to be a help, where he had formerly been a burden. He departed "*glorifying God,*" for the wonderful cure which he had performed on his body, and for the still more wonderful grace he had bestowed on his soul. The miracle seems to have put Christ's enemies to silence, though they can hardly be supposed to have all gone the full length of what is stated in conclusion. "*They were all amazed,*" they must indeed have been so without exception. "*And they glorified God:*" Matthew says "The multitude glorified God, who had given such power unto men." From this it would seem that their ideas of Christ were, as yet, very imperfect, and that they looked on him in no higher light than that of a man acting with delegated authority, whereas they ought to have concluded that he was the divine Messiah. Nevertheless, they glorified God, "*and were filled with fear,*" reverential dread, "*saying, We have seen strange things to-day.*" "We never saw it in this fashion;"—we never saw any thing like this.

1. *This passage suggests some serious consideration relating to the great numbers who sometimes assemble when the gospel is to be preached.* The people crowded to the house where Christ was, so that there was no admission into it, nor even room about the door. And it is surely pleasant to see, as may still be seen, multitudes flocking together to the house of God, "as doves to their windows." Of these, some hear with profit. But it is painful to think how many seem to hear in vain. Some come from mere curiosity, and others, it may be, even with worse motives. The expression used with regard to these scribes and Pharisees is very particular—they were "*sitting by.*" They did not come, and they did not even wish to be considered as humble worshippers, and learners, and as forming part of the congregation, as it might be called; but they came as censors and spies. So it is to be feared, that there are still, in our public assemblies, some who may be considered, as only "*sitting by,*" as unconcerned spectators and auditors of what is passing—perhaps even as prejudiced, proud, and captious critics. In fact, ministers are considered, by these great men in their own estimation, as preaching before them, rather than as preaching to them. If such persons entertain any reasonings in their minds against scriptural representations, despising as error what they ought to receive as truth, and being ready to call that blasphemy which is agreeable to the revealed will of God, the divine Saviour still knows their thoughts, he "*searches their reins and hearts,* and will give unto every one of them according to their works;" and he will not hold them guiltless of wilfully rejecting the light

because of the natural alienation of their minds. Let all beware, then, of sinning in this way. "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God; and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls: but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

2. *Be exhorted to imitate the benevolence of the four men who brought the paralytic to Christ.* It is obvious that they took a lively interest in the poor man's welfare. They grudged not, nor disdained the labour of carrying him. When foiled in one way, they tried another: and by ingenious contrivance, and remarkable perseverance, they at last succeeded, and they saw their kind wishes more than realized. In like manner, all who are themselves in health, strength, and comfort, ought to be ready to perform the various offices of humanity to those who are in sickness, or any trouble: and certainly, those who are labouring under the disease of palsy, being peculiarly helpless, are peculiarly in need of unwearying attention. But it is often the case, too, that Christians have friends and acquaintances under the disease of sin, and at a distance from God; and these surely, they ought to endeavour to bring to the Saviour, in the spiritual sense. That is, they should, with all kindness, modesty, and prudence, do what they can to turn their attention to spiritual things, and especially to the nature and necessity of redemption. They should also, as it may be expressed, bring them to Christ in their prayers; they should pray for them with the prayer of faith, for Christ saw and was pleased with the faith of those who carried the paralytic into his presence. It is true that those who are spiritually sick must pray for themselves: but in so far as the instrumentality of human intercession goes, the prayers of their believing friends may prevail with Christ in their behalf, in a degree to which we cannot set limits. Exertions and prayers united may do much. With such limitations as the cessation of miracles requires, the spirit of the following words may be applied to this subject: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." "The effectual," inwrought, energetic, "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.—Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

3. *There are some things here for the consideration of the sick.* There is seldom any necessity to say much in order to impress them with a proper sense of the evil of bodily disease, or to inspire them with a desire for deliverance from it; but there is, in general, much need to admonish them of the religious improvement they should make of their sickness. By beginning

with forgiving the paralytic's sins, our Lord may be considered as teaching all sick persons the paramount importance of that blessing. However desirous, therefore, they may be for restoration to health, they should be still more desirous for acceptance with God. Their trouble should remind them to lay to heart the things which belong to their peace. And if their sickness has this effect, they may well bless God for it. As far as we can see, the paralytic might never have been brought to Christ in any way, and might never have been forgiven, had it not been for his palsy: there can be no doubt, therefore, that he will praise God for the palsy to all eternity. The sick, then, may well be of good cheer, if their sickness bring them to Christ for forgiveness, even though their sickness should not be removed; whereas, they have but small cause to rejoice whose sickness is removed, but whose sins are retained. How worthy of the adoption of every sick person, is the prayer of the Psalmist: "Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins!"

4. There are some circumstances in this history which may *illustrate, in the way of analogy, the restoration of men from a state of sin*. A state of sin is a state of spiritual paralysis—it is a complete relaxation of the nerves of religious action. However vigorous the natural man may be in other respects, here he is, as the Scripture expresses it, "without strength." "His whole head is sick, and his whole heart is faint."

Again, the way in which our Lord spoke to this paralytic furnishes an answer, both to those who object to the doctrine of man's spiritual inability altogether, and also to those who misapply that doctrine. Thus, in answer to those who attempt to disprove the doctrine of man in his unregenerated state being unable to do any thing truly religious, from the exhortations which are given to sinners in Scripture,—which exhortations, the objectors say, would be absurd, if men were not possessed of power to obey them—we say, that this man was utterly palsied, and unable, of course, of himself to rise, and yet our Lord, instead of reckoning it absurd to speak to him, said to him: "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house." In like manner, in answer to those who so misunderstand and abuse this doctrine as to say that ministers should address themselves only to believers, and never offer the gospel, or give any exhortations, to unbelievers; we say, without adverting at present to other arguments, that our Lord's procedure here is directly in the face of such an opinion. He knew that the man could not of himself arise; and yet he commanded him to arise. So, though we know that the spiritually palsied are powerless, yet we must exhort them to bestir themselves. It is true the former was a corporeal, and therefore, in itself, blameless inability; while the latter is a spiritual and voluntary, and therefore sinful inability; but the resemblance is sufficient for our present purpose. As the former command would have been useless if Christ had

not given strength along with it, so exhortations to sinners, and indeed to believers too, are powerless in themselves; but as it is through them that the Lord works, it is right to give them, and to look to him for the blessing.

From the notice taken of faith, too, in this case, we are reminded of the necessity and instrumentality of faith in the recovery of the soul. On several occasions, Jesus said to the individual to be healed: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." In the spiritual cure, it is the truth of the gospel, applied by the Spirit, which, strictly speaking, has the virtue to heal, but it is by faith that it is received. The being enabled to believe that, "when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly," is to receive the grand restorative for the enfeebled soul. By imparting the grace of the gospel, the Lord strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees; and aware of this, we say to the debilitated: "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed." Thus, to those who have no might, the Lord increaseth strength. "Out of weakness, they are made strong;" so that, though they could do nothing before, they can do all things through Christ strengthening them.

And as this man gave proof of his cure by rising, and taking up his couch, and walking away, so all who are forgiven must, and do, give evidence of it, by rising to spiritual action, forsaking sin, and walking in the paths of holiness. If any think and say that they are pardoned, and yet still remain under the power of sin, they are grossly deceiving themselves, and bringing a heavy scandal on religion. All who are indeed accepted, depart, giving God the glory, not only with their lips, but also in their actions. It is not their fault, at least, if others do not see, and confess, and benefit by their change; for they let their light so shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven.

Lastly, *It is delightful to think that the Son of man has still power to forgive sin.* He is as able now, as he was when he was in the crowded house in Capernaum. Though we cannot say he is now more able, for he was then infinitely able, yet his ability is now at least more obvious. If he had power to forgive sin when he tabernacled in the form of suffering humanity, a poor and despised and rejected wanderer on earth, much more evident it is that he has that power now that his sacrifice is actually offered, and proved to be accepted, and now that he is seated at "God's own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." We are not left, however, to gather this from circuitous and questionable inference; for we are taught in express words, that he is enthroned in glory for this very purpose: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and

a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."* His power, then, is unquestionable; and so, surely, is his willingness; for can it be for a moment supposed that he, who was so bent on our deliverance as to lay down his life towards it, will refuse our application for that very deliverance? It will be well for us, at the same time, to remember—for it is indeed a most serious and most awakening thought—that his commission in this respect extends only to this earth. He has power to forgive sin, now that he has left the earth himself; but it is not within the divine plan, and therefore we may say, after the manner of men, and with reverence, that he cannot forgive sinners after they leave the earth. At this moment, however, he has power, nay, he is ready waiting, to forgive us our sins. Let not, then, our thoughtlessness, or our sinfulness, or our unbelief, or our guilty fears, or aught that can be named, prevail to keep us away from him. Let us come with "willing feet," if we can walk; or let us beseech others to carry us, if we be rivetted by palsy to a spot. Let us give heed to no allurements that would entice us away. Let us give place to no violence that would thrust us away. Let us persevere as for our life, and as knowing that by the door, or through the roof, or in some other way, we must get in or perish. Let us shrink from no difficulties; let us break through all obstacles; and let us not rest, till, with all our weakness and guilt and wretchedness, we find ourselves lying prostrate at the Saviour's feet. There lying, as it is to be hoped many of us do now actually lie, let us pray that his power may be present to heal us.—Divine Redeemer, and most gracious Lord! who didst die to deliver us from sins innumerable, and from calamity intolerable; we beseech thee to have mercy upon us. Thou who, when thou wast on the earth, didst forgive and restore the paralytic at Capernaum; now that thou art seated on thy throne in the heavens, mercifully pardon and strengthen us. We believe; Lord, help our unbelief. Say unto each of us, Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee. Strengthen us also to live to thy glory. Enable us to be strong in thy strength, to lean upon thine, to credit thy word, to follow thine example, to do thy commandments, to rejoice in thy love, to depend on thy promises, and to wait for thy coming: and bring us at last to the place where, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, thou livest and reignest for evermore, and where we shall join the whole company of the redeemed in saying, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Acts v. 31.

LECTURE XXII.

LUKE V. 27-32.

“ And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others, that sat down with them. 30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick. 32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

You will observe that Luke states the circumstances of which we have just read, to have taken place subsequent in time to what he had before related concerning our Lord's teaching, and his curing the paralytic, in Capernaum. “ *After these things he went forth :*” he went out of the house in which he had performed the miracle ; and, as appears from the 2d chapter of Mark,* proceeded towards the sea-side. On his way thither, he “ *saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom.*” Mark calls this man “ Levi the son of Alpheus,” and this Alpheus was also called Cleophas. As two names were then common, this Levi was also called Matthew ; so he calls himself in the passage parallel to the subject of lecture, contained in the 9th chapter of his Gospel. This Levi, or Matthew, was a publican ; that is, a tax-gatherer. These taxes were offensive to the Jews, as they were imposed on them by their Roman conquerors. Odious and oppressive at all events, the system was peculiarly so, in consequence of these taxes being first let out to men who farmed large districts of them, and then sub-let in small divisions to others, and still to the highest bidders, who were tempted to make the most of them, and whose exactions were generally immediately enforced by the Roman soldiery. Though there were, no doubt, exceptions, too many who followed this employment were unprincipled and oppressive ; hence, however different the case may be under a popular and equitable administration, the employment then was of very bad repute, it being the general opinion that no man could engage in it, except from the inordinate love of gain. Jesus saw Levi sitting at the receipt of custom, or the place where the custom was collected—probably the custom levied on goods landed and embarked at the port of Capernaum.

Levi was employed in his ordinary occupation when our Lord called him with the few but effectual words : “ *Follow me.*” The

* Verse 13.

call, being accompanied with divine power, was instantly obeyed; for Levi "*left all, rose up, and followed him.*" He gave up all his emoluments and worldly prospects, and immediately went after Christ. There is nothing said here why he may not soon have taken an opportunity of making a proper settlement of all his transactions; but the renunciation of his office was complete, for though the apostles, who were fishermen, did occasionally revert to that occupation, Levi never returned to the receipt of custom.

Let us admire, in this particular case, the gracious condescension of our Lord in choosing one of a calling so despised, to be an attendant on his person, a preacher of his gospel, and a partaker of his salvation. He thus poured contempt on the self-righteous and haughty spirit of the Pharisees, and stained the pride of all human glory. He chose "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh shall glory in his presence." Let us also admire, in this case, the wondrous power of divine grace: for here we see the love of the world, that master passion, eradicated, the heart inclined to the divine testimonies, and not to covetousness, every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and, as evidence of the great inward change, the feet following him in active and cheerful obedience. Levi followed Christ, literally and spiritually, and fully and faithfully. He followed him through life, and he followed him even unto death. Many, no doubt, censured him as a rash enthusiast, or a lunatic, rather than "admired him as a sober convert; but he is even now reaping the abundant reward; his loss is gain, and his contempt glory."*

But, my brethren, it is the character of all who are saved, that they follow Christ. He declares: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." What he said, therefore, to Matthew, he may be considered as still saying to each of us: "*Follow me.*" This ought to be our chief concern, with which we should not allow any other pursuit to interfere. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." We should follow him as our Redeemer, on whom alone we have to rely for acceptance; as our Lord, whose commands we obey; and as our great pattern, who has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. We should follow him in our hearts, and in our conduct; and that whithersoever he goeth. For him we should forsake all in mental, and if need be, in actual renunciation. We must forsake property and friends, and life itself, if necessary. We must, at all events, forsake sin, and the world, and all false refuges. "If any man will come after me," are his words, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Nor need we fear that by such conduct we shall be losers.

* Doddridge.

When Peter said to our Lord: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee," he said to his disciples: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left houses, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Verse 29: "*And Levi made him a great feast in his own house.*" The modesty of Matthew's own account of this affair is worthy of remark. While Luke says that Matthew "made him a great feast in his own house," Matthew* merely says, that "Jesus sat at meat in the house:" he says nothing of a great feast, and does not so much as mention that the entertainment was in his own house. In like manner, Matthew, in describing his own compliance with the divine call, merely says, that he arose and followed Christ, and says nothing of his leaving all—an affecting and honourable circumstance which Luke is careful to introduce. This is a modesty worthy of imitation. Men should speak very sparingly of their own sacrifices, and their own services. For men to search their own glory is not glory. "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."

This part of the evangelical history is one of many proofs that a feast, or entertainment, may be not only lawful, but commendable and useful. The vain desire of display, and wasteful extravagance, and riotous feastings in which men transgress the bounds of moderation, and regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand, are doubtless very sinful; but the feast of temperance, and kindness, and of liberality according to one's circumstances, is recommended by scriptural example and precept. It was one good trait in Job's character that he had not "eaten his morsel himself alone:" and Christians are exhorted to be given to hospitality, and to "use hospitality without grudging."

The feast given by Matthew showed with what readiness and cheerfulness he bade farewell to his worldly employment, and gave himself up to follow Christ. Instead of finding that all his happiness was gone when he became wise for eternity, he found that he was never truly happy before; and he could now eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a merry heart, because God had accepted his works. This was indeed an admirable opportunity for an open avowal of his change of life and hearty devotion to the Lord, and for bidding his former acquaintances farewell. In this view, there is a considerable similarity between Matthew's conduct and Elisha's, as recorded towards the end of the 19th chapter of 1 Kings. Elijah, having found Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, cast his mantle upon him in passing by. "And Elisha left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." This being, not an excuse to gain

* Matt. ix. 10.

time, but the working of real natural affection on the part of Elisha, who was already fully resolved to follow whither duty called, Elijah said unto him: "Go back again; for what have I done unto thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen," to show that he was to return to the plough no more, "and gave unto the people and they did eat: then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

This entertainment was obviously a mark of Matthew's high regard, and love, and gratitude to Jesus Christ. There was here kind condescension on the part of Jesus, and there was also a high gratification on the part of Matthew. Thus Lazarus and his sisters were often honoured to show their attachment to the Saviour, by receiving him into their house; and, in particular, after the resurrection of Lazarus, "they made Jesus a supper," when Martha served, and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him, and Mary anointed his feet with very costly ointment, and wiped them with her hair. We cannot now have his bodily presence; let us, however, be anxious to have his spiritual presence, and his blessing, in our dwellings.

This entertainment was also a mark of Matthew's regard for the disciples of Christ; for it appears, from the two preceding evangelists, that his disciples also were present. In like manner, if we love Christ himself, we shall also love the people of Christ, and desire to associate with them. Such intercourse should be much cultivated, for few things are more likely to edify and comfort. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Another object which, we may suppose, the now enlightened mind of Levi had in view in this entertainment was the spiritual benefit of his former worldly acquaintances: for "*there was a great company of publicans, and of others,*" or according to Matthew's own words, publicans and sinners, "*that sat down with them.*" He had invited many of his old acquaintances, the tax-gatherers; and also others, who, being regardless of religion and moral duty, were justly called, in the most unfavourable application of the word, sinners. It is not to be supposed that, with his new views, he could have asked such people to his house because of any congeniality of sentiment with them, or because of any enjoyment which he expected to derive from their society. He must have been moved to invite them by the pure motive of Christian benevolence, by the hope that what they might see and hear, in company with Christ and his disciples, might make a good impression on their minds. Wherever true religion has obtained a decided influence over the soul, it excites a desire for the spiritual good of others, and especially of one's own acquaintances. It is well worthy of the consideration of those who have become serious, how far they may safely go in preserving their intercourse with those associates who still continue without God. In many cases the danger is so great, that the intercourse ought to be entirely given up: in other cases, however, it may be in

the power of those who are happily changed to be of service, without any danger to themselves. Here "wisdom is profitable to direct." It sometimes happens that those who, in the days of their ignorance, were looked up to, and led others wrong, after they become wise to salvation, still preserve their influence over them, and are the means, under God, of leading them right.

It is not to be doubted, that though the conversation held by our Lord at this entertainment is not particularly recorded, it was of the most edifying nature. Wherever he was, and in whatever manner, and with whatever company, he was engaged, he always improved the time to the best advantage. He did not, however, on this occasion, escape the usual misrepresentation and calumny of his enemies.

"*Their scribes and Pharisees,*" who, it appears, were watching him, and who, according to the other evangelists, saw him and his disciples at meat in this company, "*murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat with publicans and sinners?*" or, as it is in Matthew, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" They reflected equally against the disciples and their Master; declaring it to be a shameful thing that the disciples, who were considered as seeking salvation, and still more, Christ, who gave himself out for a prophet, should thus openly associate with such characters, and thus countenance them in their crimes. This was a common objection of these opposers. We read in the beginning of the 15th chapter: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And when he had gone into the house of Zaccheus, the chief of the publicans at Jericho, it is said:* "When they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." They had even the impious effrontery to say: "Behold a man gluttonous, a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners." Certainly, to have gone needlessly into the company of the ungodly, and still more, to have associated with them with the view of deriving pleasure from joining in their ways, and of encouraging them in their sins, would have been justly to have merited, in its unfavourable sense, the title of their friend, and to have directly opposed the divine commandment: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.—Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Far different, however, were the motives which led our Lord to go into such company. He associated with sinners, in order to forward the great purpose for which he came into the world, namely, to seek and to save that which was lost. He admitted them into his presence, nay, even sought after them, that he might deliver them from sin, that he might convert and save them.

* Luke xix. 7.

Still, he was misrepresented and maligned by the scribes and Pharisees. These men were generally of that odious character which led them to trust in themselves that they were righteous, and despise others: they said to many a man who was a better man than themselves: "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou."—"These are a smoke in my nose," saith the Lord, "and a fire that burneth all the day." Let us beware of this proud, blind, and uncharitable spirit. Instead of being displeased with attempts to benefit those who are truly heinous offenders, or endeavouring to traduce those who may engage in such attempts as abettors of vice, let us think, and speak, and act, as becomes those who really account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners.

We may observe here, how common it is for the very best actions to be misrepresented. When even the actions of the spotless and divine Saviour could not escape detraction, it need neither surprise nor discourage his followers that theirs do not escape. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. When his followers meet with similar treatment, they should encourage themselves by the recollection of this part of his history; they should "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest they be wearied and faint in their minds."

While we should be unmoved by groundless censures, we should, however, be careful to give no just cause to the malicious to speak reproachfully. We should attend to the precepts: "Abstain from all appearance of evil;" and, "Let not your good be evil spoken of." Unquestionably there is much caution necessary in imitating this trait in our Lord's character. We are to remember that he, being himself perfectly holy, could not be injured in any society, and could not receive any contagion from any company; whereas we have the seeds of evil within us, and are very ready to be led away by the error of the wicked, and to fall from our steadfastness. We should remember, too, that the bearing of the Word of God is against unnecessary, familiar intercourse with wicked and worldly men, and especially against keeping company with notorious offenders who are called brethren, and make profession of religion.*

It is obvious, at the same time, that making worldly and sinful men our habitual and chosen associates, is a very different thing from occasionally consenting to meet them for the business of life, and still more from meeting them with the express desire of being of use to them. In fact, there is a proper medium, if we could only know it and observe it. The most common extreme, undoubtedly, is that of mingling indiscriminately and thoughtlessly in society of every kind. But there may be some serious persons who run into the opposite extreme of too great seclusion. Should, for instance, a devoted Christian resolve that

* 1 Cor. v. 9-11.

he would neither receive into his own house, nor meet in any other, any who did not appear to him to be decidedly serious; would he not thereby preclude himself, in a great measure, from all likelihood of being of use to such persons, and greatly lessen his influence on society? and would not this determination of his be the more to be regretted, the more his character and abilities rendered him capable of benefiting individuals, and of giving a tone to public opinion and public measures? I am quite aware of the importance of the distinction being properly marked between real Christians and men of the world; but then the distinction is not to be marked in that way. It is not to be marked by Christians skulking into corners, as if they were afraid, or ashamed, to be seen, or abandoning the field to the adversary, or putting their candle under a bushel. Of what possible use could a distinction be that is not seen? But it is to be marked by their standing forward in defence of the truth, by their fighting the battle of the Lord with the proper weapons, and in the proper spirit, by their being seen to differ from men of the world in having a supreme regard to eternity; and, in particular, in those things which are commonly looked on as turning points, it is to be marked by their witnessing a good confession before many witnesses—by letting their light shine before men. That society is generally to be avoided in which there is no prospect of any good being received or done. But the example of our Lord, and of the converted publican, here teaches us that believers may have occasionally in their own houses unbelievers, with the express view of their conversion: and the apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian believers,* instead of commanding them to meet all invitations from unbelievers with a refusal, gives them directions how to conduct themselves “if any of them that believed not bade them to a feast, and they were disposed to go.” Instead of doing away the distinction in question, proper conduct on properly selected occasions of these kinds is one of the most marked, and noble, and useful ways of letting the distinction be seen.

But to proceed: our Lord being aware of what was objecting by his enemies, with the view of lessening him in the estimation of his disciples, and of persuading them that they were misled, and thus, of course, inducing them to desert him, took up the question himself, though it was addressed to his disciples, and answered for himself, and, by implication, for them. “*And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.*” While this saying was a complete defence of his conduct on this particular occasion, by showing that he was exactly where he should be, namely, in the society of those who needed his aid, it stated a truth of most important general application. To say one word in support of its correctness in reference to the state of bodily health, would be altogether superfluous; for who ever doubted that it is the sick, and

* 1 Cor. x. 27.

not those who are in health, that need a physician? And however many may contrive, by various subterfuges, to escape from its proper application to themselves, it is equally true in its figurative reference, for it is obvious that the spiritually sick, that is to say, sinners, and such alone, need a spiritual physician—that is, a Saviour.

It has been made a question, however, whether it be sinners absolutely considered, or those who are sensible that they are sinners, to whom our Lord here refers. It is certain that the affirmation is here made of sinners generally, whether they be sensible of their sins or not. And does not the comparison here used go so far as to support this exact interpretation of the words? Consider the case of a literally sick man. Is it so that a sick man does not need a physician unless he be sensible of his need? The reverse is the truth. If he really be sick, his sickness alone constitutes his need, independently of his own feelings: nay, his very ignorance of his need may arise from the violence, or the insidious nature of the disease, and may, therefore, be one of the strongest proofs of his need of a physician. So it is as to spiritual disease; the simple fact, that men are sinners, causes them to stand in need of a Saviour: and if they are altogether insensible to that fact, their insensibility is a sign that their case is peculiarly bad, and their need of deliverance peculiarly great. It is this unlimited application of this particular part of the analogy between bodily and spiritual disease, that our Lord here seems to have directly in view; and this was a complete defence of his conduct in eating with publicans and sinners.

In following out the subject, however, a little further, which it is necessary to do, if we are desirous of seeing correctly its practical bearing on the actual reception of the Saviour, we soon find a very important circumstance in which the analogy between the cure of bodily sickness and that of spiritual sickness ceases: and it is this. Though a sick man will not voluntarily send for a physician, or follow his advice, unless he be convinced that he is sick; yet it is possible that he may be cured without his ever being aware of his sickness, or voluntarily applying to the physician, for his body may be wrought on without the consciousness of his mind; nay, it is even possible that he may be cured contrary to his wish—that is, by means of which he not only does not see his need, but against the application of which he may be struggling. But it is not possible that the disease of sin can be cured in that way, because it is a mental malady. The mind must be concerned in the whole process of this cure; and in particular, it is not in the nature of things that we can come to Christ for deliverance from sin, unless we be convinced that we are sinners. Indeed, the knowledge and belief of Christ's having made atonement for our sins, necessarily presupposes the knowledge and belief, and consequently, more or less, the conviction, that we are sinners. The necessity of

making this conviction a prominent object, appears from the circumstance of so many being disposed to overlook it. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness;" who say that they are "rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Common sense shows that persons in that state of mind will not believe in Christ, or receive him as their Saviour. All, then, are naturally sinners, and therefore, all need a Saviour; but some are not convinced that they are sinners, and therefore, such do not, and can not, in that state of mind, apply to the Saviour.

These two truths are quite consistent with each other; and it is of importance that they be both unequivocally held, and habitually kept in view, in their individual meaning, and also in their mutual connection. It is an error to confine the offer of the gospel to those who are sensible of their sins. The Word of God does not thus confine the offer, and the actual need of sinners requires that it should be unlimited. One of the chief evils of such a limitation is, that it has a tendency, we do not say to men on the search whether they have yet been truly convinced of sin, for that inquiry is quite scriptural; but to lead them to stop short of the actual reception of Christ, and of that mercy which alone can soften their hearts, and produce evangelical repentance. At the same time, it is equally an error, so to overstrain and misrepresent the freeness of the gospel offer, as to deny in words, or virtually to disregard, the necessity of men being made sensible of sin, in order to their obtaining deliverance from it, by accepting the offer. The law must be preached in order to press home the conviction of sin upon the conscience, and to act like a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. It is not meant that it is necessary for the mind to be under such conviction for any great length of time before it receives the gospel, or that in all cases this conviction is equally deep and painful: on the contrary, there may be great diversity, and salvation may come almost immediately on the back of conviction, or be delayed for a long period: but the reality of such conviction is essential. Nor is it meant that any gospel truth must necessarily, or should, generally speaking, be kept back, till a certain progress be supposed to be made in this conviction; on the contrary, the whole truth should be pressed on the attention: but there is a natural order in which the different parts of the truth arrange themselves, and in which they are most easily understood, and most commonly have their effect. It will be found, too, that with regard to the two points in question, there is a favourable reaction between them; that is, that a sense of sin, and an apprehension of mercy, mutually assist each other. If men are sensible of the disease of sin, they may be expected to welcome and to follow the advice of the

Physician of souls; and if they have already applied to him, and are under cure, they cannot but be more and more sensible of the reality and the malignity of their disease; in other words, the grace they are experiencing will more and more impress on them the evil of sinning against such love.

But let us apply this comparison directly *to ourselves*. Do we not all naturally labour under the disease of sin? and do we not all stand in need of the physician? Is not this a disease of the very worst kind—hereditary, of long continuance, painful, loathsome, infectious, deadly? Is not this a disease, too, for which there is only one physician, and only one remedy? The physician is Jesus Christ—the remedy is his blood. Let us despair of help in any other way; and let us apply to him, that our “faith may make us whole.” If we have never consulted him before, let us do so now. Let us not delay our application, in the absurd and hopeless idea, that we must first be cured before we are warranted to come to the physician; it is as sick persons that we need him, and as such we must come to him to be cured. Yet let us remember, that whenever men do come, they are then cured, being both pardoned and sanctified. If we are already under his healing treatment, let us continue to rely on his skill, and to follow his directions, till the evil be completely eradicated, and till we reach the place “where the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

In the defence made by our Lord of his conduct against the malicious objection of the scribes and Pharisees, there is one part omitted by Luke, which Matthew's account contains: “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.”* This is a quotation from Hosea vi. 6. It is to be understood comparatively, as if it were, “I will have mercy rather than sacrifice:” and the general rule to be deduced from it is this, that wherever they so interfere with each other that they cannot both be attended to, acts of charity are to be preferred to matters of ceremonial and of positive institution. Our Lord elsewhere† quoted this passage in proof of the lawfulness and incumbency of works of necessity and mercy on the Sabbath. To quote this passage, however, in justification of any needless of religious institutions, is a horrid perversion of the Scriptures; *when* it is truly applicable must be determined in each case conscientiously, and as in the sight of God. Of its being applicable to our Lord's conduct in this instance, there can be no doubt; nay, it went farther than his defence required: for even though the rigid notion of the Pharisees about shunning all intercourse with publicans and those whom they superciliously called sinners, had been sanctioned by positive scriptural precept, yet being of a ceremonial nature, it must have given way on this occasion; much more, therefore, ought a notion, which had no

* Matt. ix. 13.

† Matt. xii. 7.

other foundation than human tradition, to have given way. Let it be observed here, by all who would know what true benevolence is, that the work in which Christ was now engaged, namely, the conversion of souls—the promotion of the eternal welfare of men—is eminently a work of mercy. In following out the spirit of this quotation, it may be also observed, that if under the law so important a divine institution as sacrifice was to give place to mercy, and if under the gospel, even the appointed and very useful forms and means of religion are frequently to give place, in order that the substance of religion, which is the love of God and of our neighbour, may not be neglected, much more evident it is that neither thoughtlessness, nor indolence, nor pride, nor covetousness, nor any thing that is sinful or worldly, should prevent us from showing mercy when it is in our power, either to the bodies or to the souls of our fellow-creatures.

After the observations already made on the figurative part of our Lord's reply, drawn from the suggestions of common sense, with regard to the need of a physician, little need now be said on the literal part of his defence, with which he concludes: "*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" Christ did come into the world to call men to repentance. It was the very first subject on which he discoursed. After the account of his temptation in the wilderness, it is said: * "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." One great end of all he did, taught, and suffered, was to lead men to repentance, in its genuine and enlarged sense of a thorough change of heart and life, or conversion from sin to God. But if men had not been sinners, there would have been no occasion for him to come among them for any such purpose. If there were any of the sons of men who were righteous, or free from sin, it is obvious that the mission of Christ could have no relation to them. And it is certain, that while none are free from sin, those who think themselves so cannot benefit by him: he can be no Saviour to them while holding to that opinion, or, which is much the same, while inattentive to the real guilt and danger of their condition. In the presence of sinners, then, and calling them to repentance, Christ was just where he should have been; and the more clear it was that any of them were sinners above others, the more clear also were the propriety and the kindness of seeking their conversion.

And happy it is, my friends, for all of you, at this day, that Jesus is still virtually saying: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Had it been otherwise, how could there have been a ray of hope for any of you? Who of you can say, "I have made my hands clean, I am pure from my sin?" "There is none righteous, no, not one."

* Matt. iv. 17.

Those of you who are sinners, in the strongest sense of the word—sinners who have never yet repented, and who are going on in sin, unpardoned, and unrenewed—are here especially called to repentance. Reflect on your character, and compare it with the requisitions of the law of God. Let the commandment come home to your conscience, that you may feel how sin reigns in you. Begin your religion with a proper conviction of your sinfulness, as essential to your embracing the gospel so as to be saved by it. Allow your wound to be probed to the bottom, lest it be only slightly healed over, and afterwards break out worse than ever. Cry out, Unclean, unclean!—God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Connect this cry with a look to Him whom you have pierced. Connect repentance towards God with faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ: and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This passage should teach you not to despair of acceptance, however sinful you may have been. That Redeemer who made an apostle of a publican, and sat down to meet with a company of sinners, calls you in particular to repentance. You may indeed despair, if you continue impenitent; but if you arise and follow Christ, and turn from your evil ways, he will in no wise cast you out.

Nor is there any other way of safety, or any other path of duty, marked out for you who have already repented and believed the gospel. It is true you do not need to undergo the radical change of state and heart, but you still need mercy. They who have been once washed, need not afterwards but to wash their feet,* but this they must not neglect. In many things you all offend: so that in this sense you are still sinners, though, thanks to God, penitent and believing sinners. Consider, then, that Christ is still calling you to repentance; and be thankful for the call, and careful to comply with it. Let repentance be your daily, your habitual work. Cultivate an humble, lowly, and penitential frame of mind. The mercy which dissipates slavish terror, always opens up new sources of filial sorrow for having offended, and represents sin in a tenfold more odious light than ever it appeared in before. “Remember, then, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of your shame, when God is pacified towards you for all that you have done.” Say to God: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Surely it is also meet to be said unto God: “I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.”

In a word, we are all concerned in this call. The Lord “commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” Nay, we all must repent in one way or other, and sooner or later. The question is not whether we are to repent at all? but, whether

* John xiii. 10.

we are to repent now, when true evangelical repentance unto life can be found, or to repent in the other world, in a way, and in circumstances, in which repentance can have no effect but to torment us? Surely this question should be easily answered. God grant that we all may be enabled practically to give the proper answer. May we consider our ways, and turn our feet to his testimonies. And may he who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins, bestow on us these inestimable blessings!

LECTURE XXIII.

LUKE V. 33-39.

“And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34. And he said unto them, can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? 35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36. And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. 37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. 39. No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, the old is better.”

SUCH was the wisdom with which our Lord uniformly spoke and acted, that the undisguised wrath, and insidious plots, and vexatious cavillings of his enemies, and the errors, and prejudices, and infirmities of those who were on the whole his friends, were all rendered subservient to the advancement of his glory, and to the illustration and defence of his religion. We have already seen him twice called on, in this chapter, to vindicate himself against the objections of the scribes and Pharisees; namely, when they accused him of blasphemy in pronouncing forgiveness of sins to the paralytic, and when they murmured against him and his disciples for eating with publicans and sinners; and each of these occasions only afforded him an opportunity of obtaining a triumph, and of saying and doing what still powerfully tends to encourage sinners to come to him for mercy, and to strengthen the faith and call forth the admiration of all his true followers. In the compass of the same chapter, and in the verses now read, we find him a third time beset with objections, and a third time not only answering them, but taking occasion from them to lay down principles of very general and very important application.

“*And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?*” The parallel passage in Matthew* runs thus: “Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?”—and in Mark,† “And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples

* Matt. ix. 14.

† Mark ii. 18.

fast not?" From these accounts compared, it seems probable that some of John's disciples spoke on this occasion, instigated, however, by the scribes and Pharisees. It is not unusual for the enemies of the truth to sow strife among its friends. When these friends differ in opinion and practice in some points, their enemies lay hold on these points, and force them forward into undue notice, and urge to dispute about them, that they may enjoy the unseemly spectacle of their quarrelling, alienate their affections from each other, and thus injure, through them, the great cause which, notwithstanding their apparent or real differences, they have all at heart. They should be aware of this, and by meekness, forbearance, and love, disappoint the devices of the crafty, and resist the attempted intrusion of the demon of discord. Questions about fasting, as well as about purifying,* existed between the disciples of Christ and those of the Baptist, whose aim it was to prepare the way for Christ; and the Pharisees now hoped to fan the hitherto almost latent difference into a flame. But we shall see how the Lord, in his wisdom, disappointed them.

John himself was a man of an austere and mortified life. He appeared in the wilderness of Judea. He had a raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. He was denied to indulgence, and we are to conclude that he often abstained from food altogether. This habit of life well comported with the end of his ministry, which was to alarm the conscience, to lay the axe to the root of the tree, and to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, that, humbled in the dust, sinners might be prepared to welcome a Saviour. His followers, no doubt, imitated many parts of his character. In such of them as were truly contrite, something of these habits was quite natural; and it may have been that some of them went superstitiously, or from alarm, beyond what either his example or his precepts dictated: as it is often the severer parts of religion which are chiefly regarded by those who are under a spirit of bondage. They fasted often. It is also said that they made prayers: not merely that they occasionally prayed, but that they were noted for very frequent and very long seasons of devotion. Not contented with stating their own ways, they reflected on those of Christ's disciples. "Thine eat and drink," or as in the other evangelists, "fast not." Though it had been literally true, as perhaps it was, that they never fasted at all, the reply of Christ would have been enough to defend them: when we recollect, however, their Lord's directions, against ostentation in fasting, it is quite possible that they may have occasionally fasted without its being generally known. As to the insinuation (for it is not a positive charge) that they prayed not at all, or very seldom, we are sure that, like John, Christ taught his disciples to pray, and not only repeatedly commanded them to pray, but spoke the parable of

* John iii. 25.

the importunate widow, "to this end, that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." That they were now supposed to be negligent as to this duty, arose, it is to be hoped, chiefly from their attention to their Master's directions against ostentation in prayer.*

Though some of John's disciples may have put this question in the simplicity of their hearts, it is to be feared that others of them put it in a spirit of self-preference and pride, like the scribes and Pharisees, who so keenly joined issue with them on the occasion. The Pharisees, generally speaking, trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men," was the usual language of the Pharisee. "I fast twice in the week," though, be it observed, there was only one fast in the year enjoined even by the law of Moses—that on the great day of expiation. As to prayer, they loved to pray where they could be seen of men; they, "for a pretence, made long prayers, and devoured widows' houses," Surely it was with a bad grace that they boasted of their fastings and their prayers. Though the disciples of John were probably free from hypocrisy so shameful, it is not unlikely that some of them meant to suggest a contrast favourable to themselves. We have here a warning against vanity, and seeking to raise our own reputation at the expense of others. Let us not proclaim our own goodness. Or if called on to state our own religious habits, let us beware of doing so in a spirit of boasting or detraction. While we judge for ourselves, let us not condemn others. There may be good reasons for our conduct; there may also be good reasons for theirs. In many things on which there is no express precept, some liberty is allowable; and the general principle of the Word applies, "Neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse."

Without recriminating on those who thus appear to have cast some reflection on himself and his disciples, our Lord, on the supposition that they never fasted, made this satisfactory reply: "*Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?*" Can the children—that is, the people—who are invited to attend the marriage ceremony and the marriage feast, be mournful and fast, while the bridegroom is yet with them, and the season of festivity still continues? No: the time is a time for rejoicing; and lamentation and fasting would then be quite unnatural, and out of season. In like manner, Jesus was the bridegroom of the Church. He was so represented in the Book of Canticles: and he had been lately so represented by John himself, in these words: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." The bridegroom, then, was present with them; and for them to have been fasting and mourning, would have been preposterous in itself, and insulting to him. John was

* Matt. vi. 5.

now in prison; therefore his disciples might be sad: but Christ was at large, and present with his disciples; therefore it became them to rejoice.

"But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." "Our Lord seems here, with a beautiful propriety seldom observed, to suppose some hostile invasion to happen during the time of the nuptial feast, in which the bridegroom should either be slain or taken prisoner; which would damp all the joy of his friends, and change the scene into lamentation, fasting, and mourning."* So Jesus Christ was taken away from the midst of his affectionate disciples, and that, too, in a way which must have been most painful to their feelings. When he only spoke of his going away, "sorrow filled their heart;"† and he told them that, when they should not "see him," they should "weep and lament." After he left the world, they were exposed to many sorrows; and then fasting became natural, and in some cases unavoidable. Paul was "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Even unto this present hour," said he, "we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." As the disciples fasted at times from necessity, and in sympathy with painful struggles and mortifications, so they fasted at times from motives purely religious, and especially when they were to be engaged in anything peculiarly important to the Church. Thus, they fasted and prayed at the separation of Paul and Barnabas to the work of the ministry, and Paul and Barnabas themselves did the same, in ordaining elders in different churches.‡

We may observe here, that Christ's disciples have still reason for joy or sorrow, according as he is spiritually present or absent. It is well and happy with them when they enjoy the Lord's gracious and comforting presence and influences, when the candle of the Lord shines on their heads, and when by his light they walk through darkness. But when these are withdrawn, they are troubled, and constrained to say with the Psalmist: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?"

With regard to the incumbency and the manner of fasting under the Christian dispensation, there have been few who have questioned the propriety of something of the kind. Though there is no divine authority for one season more than another, and though the practice has by some been carried to a preposterous length, and various hurtful superstitions and errors have been ingrafted on it, it seems right that occasional seasons should be set apart for it. In the passage under review, it is expressly declared that Christians should fast after Christ was taken away. There have been many, especially if we may judge of their opinion by their practice, who have been inclined

* Doddridge *in locum*.

† John xvi. 6, 20.

‡ Acts xiii. 3, xiv. 23.

to think that the duty may be sufficiently observed without literal abstinence from food. They think that the literal interpretation partakes more of the carnality and ceremony of the law, than of the spirituality and freedom of the gospel; and that as Christians are said to "go up to the mountain of the Lord," to "keep a feast with unleavened bread," to "offer up sacrifices," to "offer incense and a pure offering," and the like, without at all doing what the Jews would have understood these expressions to signify; so they may be said to keep a fast, when, without abstinence from food, they improve the season for the great purpose for which even the fast on the day of expiation was instituted, namely, in the language of Moses, "to afflict the soul."* The majority, however, even of the most enlightened writers who have treated of this subject, support the idea of literal abstinence. These say there can be no doubt that such was the original meaning of the word, and that though it may be questioned whether the New Testament contains an express perpetual command, it not only does not contain any prohibition, but contains several things of a nature calculated to exempt those who fast literally from the charge of superstition, and even to encourage the practice in a reasonable and moderate degree.

But whatever may be thought of the existence or the want of a positive command to abstain from food, as a necessary religious duty, there are circumstances in which such abstinence is entirely, or in a good measure, imposed by nature. In seasons of deep grief, a man is indisposed to eat: his "life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat;" his "tears are his meat, day and night;" his heart is so full and so oppressed that his appetite is gone; he either loathes food, or is so absorbed, that he forgets it. Thus, literal fasting has its origin in nature, and becomes, in some instances, an index of the already distressed state of the mind, in which it may be on spiritual as well as on temporal accounts. When, and how far, it may be with propriety voluntarily resorted to as a means of *producing* that distressed state of mind, it is for every man to consider for himself. In some cases, it may be a help to contrition and devotion; in others, it may produce such a restlessness as to unfit the mind for religious exercises.

To whatever conclusion, too, we may come as to abstaining from our ordinary food, there are several things which must be allowed, in either case, to be of still greater importance. It is obvious, for example, that the state of the mind is the most important consideration. No outward mortifications, and no appearances, no professions of contrition can be of any value, if the soul remain unimpressed and unsubdued. In whatever way men fast, it is necessary to keep in mind our Lord's directions against ostentation. "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward;" that is, they have it already in the

* Lev. xvi. 29.

applause of ignorant men : and it is all the reward they are ever to have. " But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father who is in secret ; and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." It is important also to remember how Scripture warns men against all needless austerities, which so readily increase to absolute torments, and so naturally lead men away from the true doctrine of forgiveness, and deceive them into the imagination that by such penances they make satisfaction for their sins ; which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. As to literal abstinence for a time, soon succeeded by unlimited gratifications, and a temporary restraint on sinful habits, which is gladly withdrawn when the period of confinement has expired, such things are a horrid mockery of religion. A true fast, again, must be a fast unto the Lord—it must be sincerely observed from a regard to his glory, and according to his will. " The word of the Lord of hosts came unto Zechariah, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me ? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves ?"

The following passage, in the 58th chapter of Isaiah, contains various important instructions on the subject of fasting : " Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not ? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ? Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness ; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him : and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee : the glory of the Lord shall be thy rear-ward." From this passage we learn, that a fast-day not properly kept, instead of being acceptable, is exceedingly offensive to God ; that it ought to be a day on which men rest from their ordinary amusements and work ; that oppression, and strife, and all kinds of iniquity, are then more than usually heinous ; that men should then abound in deeds of charity ; that the good effects should continue after the day is past ; and that such a

fast is most pleasing to God, and will be productive of much benefit to its observers.

Especially, a day of fasting is now to be kept as a day of solemn humiliation and prayer. The exercises of such a day should be chiefly characterized by what is penitential. There should be confession of sin, particularly and fully. There should be much self-abasement, and deep contrition of soul. There should be the renunciation of evil committed, and the commencement of duty neglected. And the whole should be not only consistent with the doctrines of the gospel, but completely amalgamated with them. The confession of sin must be connected with application for mercy through the Redeemer. There must be both "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." We should "look on Him whom we have pierced, and mourn." The duties of the day should be attended to in private, by "families apart," and by individuals apart. And they should be attended to in public, in the devout services of the house of God. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet; let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."

But to proceed to the remaining verses of the chapter:—In connection with what he had said on the subject of fasting, and addressing himself still to the scribes and Pharisees, and the disciples of John, our Lord "*spake also a parable unto them, No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old,*" or as in Mark,* *seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: "if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old."* The expression "new cloth," would have been more correctly rendered, "raw or undressed cloth;" for it means, not merely cloth that has never been worn, but cloth that has not passed through the hands of the fuller.† Such cloth, especially if woollen, would be very coarse and unpliant, and therefore, if joined to a garment, the cloth of which was beautifully finished, and somewhat worn, would not only have a very incongruous and unpleasant appearance, but be soon torn away, and thus increase the rent which it was intended to repair. When pieces of cloth are to be joined together, men study to have them as much as possible of the same colour and texture.

Our Lord also spoke this other parable to the same purpose: "*And no man putteth new wine into old bottles. else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.*" Bottles made of glass, or earthenware, are as strong when they are old.

* Mark ii. 21.

† Ἀγνάφου.

as when they are new; so that this parable would not apply to them. But our Lord refers to bottles made of skins of animals, or leather, which not only were used before the invention of glass, but, as appears from the accounts of travellers, are much used in the East to the present day. It is obvious that such bottles must be very suitable for travelling, as easily carried on the backs of camels, or horses, without the danger of breaking. When old, however, and long used, and much exposed to the weather, such bottles must become weak, and also ready to burst, especially when new and fermenting wine is put into them. An apt illustration of this is found in the way in which the Gibeonites* craftily obtained a league from the Israelites. "And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, they did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old and rent, and bound up; and old shoes clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them, and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went unto Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country, now therefore make ye a league with us:" and, in further urging their suit, they said, "These bottles of wine which we filled were new; and behold they be rent." The literal meaning, then, of this parable is plain.

Both these parables are founded on a supposition of something injudicious and incongruous being done; and therefore, both apply exactly in the way of defending Christ's treatment of his disciples, in not urging them to fastings, and other acts of great self-denial, or to make more rapid progress than could reasonably be expected of them, but accommodating his injunctions to their circumstances and strength. "*No man also*," adds he, in the last verse of the chapter, in a third parable, "*no man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better.*" The application intended by our Lord to be made of this verse probably was, that as men who were attached by long custom to a particular kind of wine, or indeed to any habit whatever, could not be expected, all at once, to become very fond of a different; in a word, as changes should be made gradually, so it was proper that, without at all giving place to what was wrong, or neglecting what was essential, his disciples should be gradually trained up, and accustomed to the new habits, and especially to the more trying duties of the Christian life. It was, accordingly, in this wise and gracious manner that he always proceeded. In him were beautifully fulfilled the words of Isaiah: he shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."† He dealt with them thus, not that he might keep them back, but that he might the more effectually conduct them at last to the highest attainments. "I have

* Josh. ix. 4.

† Isa. xlii. 3. "The bruised reed," &c.

yet many things to say unto you," said he, "but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." It is, indeed, the rule of God's procedure with his people, to proportion their lessons, services, and trials, to their capacity, progress, and strength. When he was to conduct the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan, he "led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." He accustomed them, however, in due time, to face and to vanquish their enemies; and after many trials and chastisements, brought them into the promised land. So it is still: he considers his people's frame, he lays no trial on them but what he enables them to bear: but, though he leads on gently, he leads on firmly; he carries them on towards perfection, and receives them at last to himself.

Now, brethren in Christ, attention to the lesson taught in these parables is of great importance, under God, to the success of genuine, unconstrained religion, both in others, and in ourselves. No doubt the views which we entertain, on which we act, and which we recommend to *others*, ought to be decidedly scriptural, and calculated in all cases, without compromise, to promote faith and holiness; but we ought never to encumber these views with difficulties and hardships of our own contrivance, nor ought we to proceed as if everything which may be proper on some occasions were necessary on all. Consider what an obstacle inattention to this must throw in the way of men of the world. They are but too ready, at all events, to consider a religious life as gloomy, painful, and superstitious: why then, though it may be impossible, on even the most prudent plan, to avoid giving offence, why represent it with forbidding features which are altogether foreign to it? or why insist on fixing the first regards of those who are already prejudiced against it, on the less engaging and less important, rather than on the more engaging and more important, of its own real features? It may be impossible to prevent the way of truth from being evil spoken of; but let us study to furnish no just occasion for such misrepresentations. Let us endeavour to exhibit that religion which we would recommend, free from distortion and caricature, and in its own beautiful harmony of parts: and let us do what we can to convince its enemies that it is reasonable, "true, venerable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."

Consider, too, how prejudicial an effect the insisting prematurely, and with undue earnestness, on the more difficult and severe parts of religion, is likely to have on those who are beginning to inquire after the way of life, and to feel some anxiety about their salvation. Is not this likely entirely to discourage them, and to lead them to suppose that any thing like a competent knowledge of the doctrines, and compliance

with the duties of Christianity, is altogether impracticable for them? Is it not like expecting scholars to manifest a knowledge of the higher branches of a science, before they have yet mastered the elements? or like expecting children to be possessed of as much solidity, and to carry as heavy a burden as men? Why call on those who have but lately begun to inquire, to make up their minds, and to make definite declarations as to those opinions which require much experience and very enlarged views to comprehend them, and on which, perhaps, even truly pious persons are divided? Such inquirers have need that one teach them the first principles of the oracles of God; they have need of milk, and not of strong meat: "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Some things are indispensable, and therefore to be pressed immediately: others are useful, and therefore to be inculcated in due time. There are many persons who are very hopeful, but who are not yet able to receive every thing. Should we not, therefore, beware of overdoing in our attempts with them, lest we overwhelm them, or disgust them? As children sometimes contract a permanent dislike to food with which they have been once surfeited, so may inquirers in reference to the bread of life. And as it is with the doctrines, so it is with the observances of religion. Some considerable attention should be expected, and will no doubt be given, to these observances by the serious inquirer, whether young in years, or young in experience and progress: but it would be too much to expect of him that high measure of devotedness which some exemplify who have been long under the influence of the truth. The habitual superiority to the things of sense, and the large portion of time and thought devoted to employments strictly spiritual, which might be quite easy, nay, delightful to them, might be unattainable, or burdensome to him, and therefore, if indiscreetly urged on him, might lead him to give up the pursuit altogether.

But there is a danger of a different kind, in some cases to be dreaded, from laying down an injudiciously rigid line of thought and conduct to the inexperienced: namely, that though it may not discourage them, or disgust them at religion altogether, it may mislead them as to its real nature. If, for example, their attention be at first called to the niceties of theological disquisition, and the depths of Christian experience, there must be a danger of their supposing that these are the most important things, and that religion consists in being able to understand and accustomed to speak on these points, rather than in actually believing and exemplifying the doctrines and duties which lie on the very surface of Christianity. If, again, they be pressed to adopt habits of mortification to which their light does not lead, there must be a danger of their substituting these in the

place of true evangelical repentance ; a danger of their overlooking other things of much more importance ; like the Pharisees, who were scrupulously attentive to the less, but neglected the weightier matters of the law ; a danger of their having recourse to austerities, altogether unscriptural and revolting, or at least of their resting in mortifications, as penances, which make satisfaction for their sins, and as acts of discipline which reform their hearts, to the neglect of that one great atonement which is available by faith alone, and of that wise and gracious provision for the purification of the soul by the agency of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the gospel. This is far from being an imaginary evil. It prevails to the most awful degree under the darkness of superstition, of heathenism, and popery ; but it may be detected among ourselves in the case of some who, when awakened to a desire after salvation, with the view of improving their state, forbear many things, and do many things, nay, who will do and suffer almost anything, rather than submit to the truly mortifying, sin-destroying, and most blessed doctrine of Christ crucified.

Upon the whole, then, much prudence should be exercised in reference to *others*, that the worldly may not be hardened in their prejudices, that the contrite may not be overwhelmed, and that the inquirer may not be discouraged, or disgusted, or misled ; but that the whole counsel of God may be declared and embraced in due order ; and that according to God's own way, men may be brought "to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." In all this, "wisdom is profitable to direct ;" *that* wisdom let us seek in the study of the Word, and under the teaching of the Spirit.

This passage may be considered, finally, as suggesting some instructions in reference to *ourselves*. It reminds us to study the proprieties of time, and of other circumstances. We are not, under the idea of remarkable zeal, to set aside all regard to nature, and convenience, and adventitious circumstances, inviting or discouraging certain things. We are to refrain from rashness and eccentricity. We are to study to give every thing its proper place, and to attend to every thing in its proper time. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." In particular, "there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh," or to rejoice. The time of great temporal and spiritual prosperity, is a time for great gratitude and joy : the time of trial and of backsliding, is a time for deep humiliation and grief. In the day of prosperity, we should be joyful ; in the day of adversity, we should consider. "Is any afflicted ; let him pray. Is any merry ; let him sing psalms." With regard to the particular duty of religious fasting, let us observe it when occasions which are thought suitable occur : and let us habitually cultivate a spirit of self-denial, and keep under our body and bring it into a subjection to the laws of Christ. Let us also hence learn to attend ourselves, first and chiefly, to the grand

essentials of religion, lest by unduly magnifying the **circumstantials**, we become bigoted and censorious, and fall, though not into fatal, yet into hurtful, errors. We learn here, too, that **Christians** should beware of overtasking themselves. The other extreme of laxity is the more common, but this is sometimes fallen into. The judgment and the memory may be injured by too great application; and those pious exercises which ought to be delightful, may become, from our want of moderation, tedious and burdensome to us.

At the same time, let none imagine that there is here to be found any palliation of irreligion, or of lukewarmness, or of remaining stationary. Though Christ's people are not to be hurried on beyond their strength, yet they are all actually on the way to glory, and should be all making progress on that way. Let us, then, be deeply in earnest. Let us press forward with increasing speed. Let us seek to be more and more alive to all the realities of eternity, and more and more dead to all the allurements of the world. "Leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Let our strength be in the Lord, and our hearts be in the ways of his heaven-bound pilgrims: and may he enable us to grow in grace and knowledge, and to go on from strength to strength, till we appear before him in Zion.

LECTURE XXIV.

LUKE VI. 1-11.

And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-days? 3. And Jesus answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? 5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. 6. And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath-day; that they might find an accusation against him. 8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? 10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."

MUCH has been written with the view of settling the meaning of the word * here rendered, "*the second Sabbath after the first.*" It may be enough here, however, without enlarging on them, to mention the two opinions which have been chiefly espoused. Some commentators† are for rendering it, "the second prime Sabbath," and are for understanding by it the day of Pentecost, which was the second great festival: the first day of unleavened bread falling on a Sabbath, being called the "first prime or chief Sabbath," the day of Pentecost, so falling, being called as here, "the second prime Sabbath," and the first day of the feast of tabernacles being called the "third prime Sabbath." The other opinion, and that which seems the more probable, is that Luke means "the first Sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread."‡ This opinion is founded chiefly on the direction in Leviticus xxiii. 15, to count seven Sabbaths "from the morrow after the Sabbath;" that is, from the second day of unleavened bread. It is obvious, however, that the difficulty of this question is much greater than its importance, especially in a practical exercise of this kind.

Our Lord, we are told, "*went through the corn fields*" on that Sabbath-day; accompanied, as usual, by a number of his disciples. There is nothing in this part of our Lord's history to

* *δευτερον*.

† Grotius, Hammond, &c.

‡ Lightfoot, Whitby, Doddridge, Dr Clarke, &c.

encourage unnecessary walking or journeying on the Sabbath. Instead of this, the general bearing of the account is quite the reverse, as well as his example on other occasions. Before any such unhallowed conclusion can be drawn from this account, it must be shown that he and his disciples were walking on the Sabbath merely for the sake of walking, merely from worldly considerations, and without any direct religious object in view. Nothing, however, of this kind can be shown. But if we are to conjecture the reason of his movement on this occasion, from his devout attention to all the ordinances of divine appointment, from his being always anxious to embrace every opportunity of promoting the kingdom of God, and from its being elsewhere expressly said, that it was his custom to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, we must suppose that he was on his way to the synagogue, or to some place where he would have an opportunity of engaging in religious exercises. With a similar view of reaching the house of God, it is still not merely lawful, but incumbent, in many to walk, and even to travel a great distance, on the Sabbath.

In the parallel passage of Matt. xii. 1, we are told that “the disciples were an hungered.” Probably they had been so engaged with Christ, and were so anxious to be forward in good time to the synagogue, that they had forgotten, or had not had leisure, to take their ordinary food in the morning. In this there is a rebuke to those who are so indifferent to the things of God, as to allow the low consideration of a regard to food, or the like, to detain them from his house; or who, rather than alter the usual hour of a meal, or put themselves to any inconvenience, absent themselves from perhaps a half of the public exercises of religion. How unlike are such careless ones to these disciples! and how unlike are they to Job, who could say: “I have esteemed the words of God’s mouth more than my necessary food!”

Being thus hungry, the “*disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.*” This was expressly allowed by the law of God. “When thou comest into thy neighbour’s vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.”* While this law forbade the abuse of kindness by unreasonable encroachments, it intimated the plenty which should abound in the promised land, from which a little would never be missed; it provided for kindness to travellers and strangers; it encouraged the people to be generous and hospitable; and it taught them not rigidly to insist on their own in matters of small moment, but to say: “What is that between me and thee?” However disposed, therefore, the Pharisees were to find fault with Christ’s disciples, they did not

* Deut. xxiii. 25.

blame them for the action itself; but they blamed them for doing it on that day. "*Certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-days?*" If unlawful in any sense, it must have been so only in regard to the tradition of the elders, and the arbitrary and overstrained interpretations of the Pharisees, who chose to view it as a kind of reaping and threshing, or laborious work:—a view of the thing worthy of hypocritical and blind guides, who "strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel;" who in some things hesitated at the slightest appearance of acting contrary to the letter of the law, but in others grossly violated, without remorse, both its letter and its spirit.

The disciples being thus attacked, our Lord, who was at the same time thereby reflected on, kindly and wisely took up their cause. In doing so he appealed to Scripture, saying to their accusers: "*Have ye not read so much as this?*" Many mistakes arise from ignorance or forgetfulness of the Word of God, a moderate attention to which would immediately correct them; and with those who have a proper regard to its authority, no argument is so conclusive as an apt quotation from it. Our Lord first brings forward the example of David and his companions. Have ye not read "*what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?*" According to the law, there were presented on the table in the tabernacle, as a memorial before the Lord, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel, twelve cakes. Every Sabbath-day these cakes were removed, and replaced by newly-baked ones: and Aaron and his sons were directed to eat those which were removed, in the holy place, strangers being expressly forbidden to eat of them.* Notwithstanding these regulations, however, we read in 1 Sam. xxi., that when David, who, with some attendants, was flying from the wrath of Saul, in great haste and ready to faint, applied to Ahimelech, the priest at Nob, "the priest gave him hallowed bread; for there was no bread there but the shew-bread that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away." The necessity of the case justified a departure from this, as indeed it would have done from any ritual institution. In like manner, and still more plainly, did the privations to which the disciples were subjected justify them in this part of their conduct, which could hardly be properly considered even as an apparent breach of the Sabbath, or of any law whatever.

In the parallel passage, Mark ii. 26, this occurrence in the life of David is said to have taken place in the days, not of Ahimelech, as we read in Samuel, but of "Abiathar the high priest." This difficulty is solved by supposing that Ahimelech was actually high priest at the time; that Abiathar, who was his son, then

* Lev. xxiv. 5; Exod. xxix. 33.

served in a conspicuous station under him, and by anticipation was called, by our Lord, the high priest, as he became so after his father was slain; and that Christ prefers mentioning his name, as he was a much more celebrated character than his father.

According to the more full account given by Matthew (xii. 5), our Lord farther said: "Or have ye not read in the law, how that, on the Sabbath-days, the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?" They profane the Sabbath—that is, in kindling the fires, in killing, dressing, and presenting the sacrifices appointed for the Sabbath, and the like; they do no little work, and yet their conduct is blameless, nay, praiseworthy. But, added our Lord, "I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple." Great as was the temple in which Jehovah was worshipped and dwelt symbolically, much greater was Jesus Christ himself, of whom the most sacred institutions of the temple were but types, and in the temple of whose body dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, not symbolically, but bodily and really. If, then, the priests were justified in these very considerable labours which they underwent in their attendance on the temple, much more were his disciples in the far less laborious offices of their attendance on him.

After having advanced these scriptural examples, our Saviour said: "*The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath;*" "*or even of the Sabbath,*" which shows it to be a very important institution. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. "Ye call me Master and Lord," said he; "and ye say well, for so I am." All things are put under his feet; and he is especially "head over all things to his Church." He was Lord of the Sabbath in particular, as, the world being created by him, he instituted the Sabbath originally in commemoration of that work; as it was again proclaimed by him from Mount Sinai; and as Head of the Christian Church, he had still full power over the Sabbath, and was soon about to change the day of its observance, that henceforth it might bear his name, and be called the Lord's-day, and be especially commemorative of the work of redemption so gloriously established by his resurrection. His title, "The Lord of the Sabbath," implies that, in substance, the institution was to remain under the Christian dispensation, and that the time of the Sabbath should be dedicated to him—the only question being, whether he might not in some instances be more honoured and more effectually served by some departure from its absolute rest. As Lord of the Sabbath, he enacts that works of necessity, being really such, and not pretended, are lawful on that day. He here rests, then, the defence of his disciples in this case on the question of authority; intimating, that as he was vested with full power what to forbid and what to command, it was quite enough that they had his approbation of their conduct. Indeed, we may lay it down as a universal rule, that we need seek no farther for the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any action,

after we have found a distinct declaration of the mind of Christ with regard to it. Though nothing more had been said, this should have been sufficient. Our Lord, however, condescends to multiply reasons on this occasion.

In addition to the circumstances mentioned by Luke, Matthew* informs us that Jesus said: "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." This is a quotation from Hosea vi. 6, where the words are: "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." It is one of the passages which, though expressed absolutely, must be understood comparatively. It is not that God did not at all require sacrifices under the law, or that he does not at all require the literal observance of the rest of the Sabbath under the gospel: but it is that he prefers services of mercy; and that when there is any incompatibility between works of necessity or mercy and observances of a ceremonial or positive nature, the former are to have the preference. If the objectors had known and considered this, they would not have condemned Christ's disciples for this harmless and necessary action. We should always be cautious in forming, and still more in pronouncing, an opinion unfavourable to others. "Judge not," says our Lord, "that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

When we consult Mark,† we find that on the same occasion Christ also advanced, in defence of his disciples, this general sentiment: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Even before the fall, the blessing and sanctifying of the seventh day must have been intended not only for the glory of God, but also for the benefit of man, in various ways of which it is now difficult to form any distinct idea. Its continuance after the fall, is expressly spoken of in a way that shows it was designed for man's good: thus, it is said in Exodus, to have been appointed that man might rest and "be refreshed:" and God says in Ezekiel: Moreover, also, I gave them my Sabbath, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." The Sabbath was not first instituted, and then man created to keep it: but man was first made, and afterwards the Sabbath was made, or appointed, for him and his benefit. Its advantages are many and great, in reference both to his body and soul, both to time and eternity. The goodness and wisdom of God are manifest, even in its temporal advantages; as it brings welcome rest and refreshment to the body, which would be impaired by uninterrupted labour; as it raises man in the intellectual scale; and as it promotes cleanliness, civilization, good manners, gentleness, benevolence, and the peace and good order of society. But still more it is for man's spiritual advantage, as it secures him leisure

* Matt. xii. 7.

† Mark ii. 27.

to attend to the concerns of his soul, and as it furnishes him with a regular and frequent call to engage in the exercises of religion, and to wait on God in all those ordinances which on that day, according to the blessing annexed to it, are found to be peculiarly instrumental in promoting man's conversion, edification, and preparation for heaven. This being the case, it is obvious that the general reason of the law, man's benefit, should be considered in its particular applications; so that the letter of the law is not to be adhered to when such adherence would be to man's real detriment. Particular cases must be judged of by this general rule, so that in cases in which the rigid observance of the letter would contradict the spirit of the law, by being plainly injurious to ourselves or others, such observance is to be dispensed with. Thus, the Sabbath being intended for the advantage of our souls, its religious exercises ought not to be so conducted as to be reasonably considered as burdensome, and, of course, disadvantageous to our souls. And the Sabbath being also intended for the benefit of our bodies, in conjunction with our spiritual good, it is certain that such an institution cannot be intended to bind us up from making any exertion which may be necessary to prevent the destruction of the body, or from attending to what may be needful for the support of the body, and fitting it to go along with the mind in religious duties. In this way, the application of this truth to the defence of the disciples is obvious.

What a kind Master do we still serve, when we serve God, by remembering his Sabbath-day to keep it holy! for it is kept holy both occasionally by works of necessity and mercy, and generally by rest and devotion. We are the gainers, and not God. It is our advantage which he has in view. Ought we not, then, always to propose to ourselves advantages, real scriptural advantages, from this blessed day, when we awake in its morning? and ought we not to examine ourselves, and consider what advantage we have received on it, when its evening is closing upon us? May the Lord forgive us wherein we have violated this commandment in time past, and give us grace to be more conscientious in time to come. May we be enabled to keep it in the right spirit and manner; equally remote from levity and from gloom, from the neglect of its real duties, and from superstitious will-worship and pharisaical hypocrisy; viewing and feeling all its proper employments at once as our duty, and our privilege; and calling and counting the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable.

Luke next proceeds to relate an occurrence which, though it took place at a different time, was equally regarded by the Pharisees as a breach of the Sabbath. "*It came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught?*" It was his custom to frequent the synagogues, both to join in the worship, and to teach: and he sometimes, as on this occasion, confirmed his doctrine by the display of his divine power.

At this time a very remarkable circumstance occurred. There was present in the synagogue "*a man whose right hand was withered.*" That hand, which of the two, would have been of the greater service to him, if it had been sound, was entirely blasted and useless, the nerves and sinews being shrunk up. The scribes and Pharisees, notwithstanding their having been so completely defeated in their former attempt, now "*watched*" our Lord, to see "*whether he would heal on the Sabbath-day,*" in order that they might find a pretence for bringing against him "*an accusation*" of Sabbath-breaking.

"*But,*" says the evangelist, "*he knew their thoughts.*" There are many particular instances recorded of Christ's knowing men's thoughts; and it is declared, in words of universal application, that "*he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.*" Important at all times, the recollection of this sublime truth, that the Son of God knows our thoughts, is peculiarly appropriate when we are thus assembled together. He himself says: "*All the Churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts.*" How ought we to be affected by the idea that the state and the workings of our minds are perfectly manifest in his sight—all naked and open before him with whom we have to do! How encouraging to all that is good, to know that he is familiar with every thought and feeling of faith, and love, and reverence, and penitential sorrow, and pious gratitude and joy! And how ought the conviction of his presence and omniscience to check every sinful and every wandering thought! What can it avail any of us to come and sit before him as his people sit, and to present all the outward semblance of gravity and deep interest, if yet we be following out in our minds thoughts of foolishness and sin, if we be caring for none of the things of Christ, and if our imaginations be wandering over the mountains of vanities? Shall not our divine Redeemer "*search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of our hearts.*"

Jesus, knowing the malicious thoughts of his enemies, was not, however, diverted nor deterred from going on with his benevolent purpose. So let us not be turned aside from the duty we owe to God and our neighbour, either by the perverse reasonings or by the threatened violence of men. "*He said to the man who had the withered hand, Rise up and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.*" Rising from his seat, he came forward, and stood in a conspicuous part of the synagogue, expecting probably to receive the benefit of a cure. Here was a spectacle which, it might have been supposed, would have excited the deepest interest in all who were present. Knowing the miraculous power which our Lord possessed, and had often exercised, it might have been expected that they would have united in beseeching him to have pity on the poor afflicted man, and restore him to the comfort of strength, and to the capacity for earning his daily bread. But no; suspecting Christ's gra-

cious intention, the Pharisees, as appears from Matthew, asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?" putting the question in the most general way, as including all the attendance and labour connected with the healing art, that they might have the most plausible ground for accusing him. No doubt, there are often many things done in reference to the sick on the Sabbath, which, instead of being (as they sometimes are, without any good reason) intentionally fixed for the Lord's-day, had better be deferred to the day following, or attended to the day before: but generally speaking, the lawfulness, nay, incumbency, of healing or endeavouring to heal the sick on the Sabbath, is unquestionable. Even where much attention and labour are necessary for this purpose, they ought to be bestowed: and therefore, it was abundantly evident that there could be nothing improper, but that there was every thing commendable, in healing on the Sabbath, where hardly any time or labour was to be required at all—nothing but the speaking of a word.

According to Matthew, who alone mentions the captious question of the Pharisees, our Lord replied by appealing to their own opinion and practice, in such a case as this: "What man shall there be among you that shall have but one sheep that shall fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" They knew that a regard to their own interest would lead them to do so; and independently of this, it would be right, for a "merciful man regardeth the life of his beast."—"How much then," added Christ, "is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well," that is, to perform lovely acts of mercy and charity to man, "on the Sabbath-days."

After this, according to Luke, our Lord said further to them: "*I will ask you one thing, Is it lawful on the Sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?*" There was in this question something very cutting, and very conclusive. He, in all probability, alluded to their secret purpose of destroying his life—a purpose which they were cherishing in their hearts, at the very time they were so hypocritically charging him with disregard to the Sabbath. This was a question which could not be answered except to their entire confusion. Convicted, therefore, in their own consciences, but too proud and too obstinate to confess it, we are informed by Mark, "that they held their peace."

Jesus then "*looked round about upon them all,*" and as Mark more fully informs us, "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Meek and lowly, he was yet susceptible of anger; his anger, however, was not like the unruly and often ill-directed passion which agitates us, but holy and just. He was angry and filled with indignation at the sin; but he pitied and grieved for those who were guilty of it, when he thought of the fatal consequences of their obstinacy. Sinners! reflect that your transgressions, and especially your obstinate rejection

of the Gospel, are still very displeasing to the Son of God. He is angry with the wicked every day; and he looks round about upon you with anger at this moment. It is a great grief to him, also, to see you thus apparently bent on your ruin: and he calls on you, and waits for you to repent. Think of this, however, that the time is coming when his anger will be unmixed with pity. Tremble to think of the flashing indignation with which he will look round about upon you, when the great day of his wrath is come, and when none of you shall be able to stand. O ye who are not only blind to the danger of his ire, but proof against the meltings of his compassion! whence this impious daring, and whence at the same time, this ungrateful insensibility? Is it because of his very goodness and long-suffering? Surely if it be so, you will at least blush to avow it. Yet do not rest in such a conviction as will only cause you sullenly to hold your peace. Let the Redeemer's blended look of anger and grief, and compassion and entreaty, move you to fear, to hope, to penitence, to confidence, to love, to joy, to an entire surrender of yourselves to his grace and government. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Having thus looked round about upon them all with anger and grief, our Lord said unto the man who had the withered hand: "*Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other.*" Divine power accompanied the command. In the willing and ready attempt, the disabled man was strengthened for that particular action, of which before, and of himself, he was altogether incapable: and not only so, but his withered hand was completely and permanently restored, and continued as well and as strong as the other.

Here was a miracle of mercy, which might have been expected to call forth the admiration and thankfulness of the spectators, and to have made them receive Christ as the great prophet and deliverer. But instead of this, "*they were filled with madness:*" they were mad with rage, for excessive anger is a species of madness: "*and they communed one with another what they might do to Jesus:*" they discoursed together by what means they might arrest his growing fame, and put a period to his labours and his life. Matthew says: "Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him:" and according to Mark, "the Pharisees took counsel for this purpose with the Herodians." The Herodians are mentioned only on two other occasions in Scripture, and from these but little can be gathered concerning them. Matthew* and Mark† inform us, that, on a certain occasion, the Pharisees sent out some of their disciples, with the Herodians, to entangle Christ in his talk: and a reference seems to have been made by our Lord, to the opinions of the Herodians, when he charged the disciples,‡

* Matt. xxii. 16.

† Mark xii. 13.

‡ Mark viii. 16.

saying: "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." Nor is the information with regard to the Herodians to be drawn from uninspired sources very full or certain. They appear to have derived their name from Herod: which of the Herods, however, is not agreed, though probably Herod the Great, whom they are said to have studiously courted, and even to have held for the Messiah: and they are said to have been, as politicians, very zealous for the authority of the Romans over the Jews, and to have been disposed to conform in many things which were not agreeable to the law of Moses. In these points it is obvious that they were diametrically opposed to the Pharisees. It is certain from Scripture, that they formed a sect distinct from the Pharisees and Sadducees, having a leaven, or doctrine, peculiar to themselves, against which our Lord uttered a warning. We may here just observe, that, besides the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, mentioned in Scripture, there was a fourth Jewish sect of note, whose opinions and habits are described at length by Josephus, namely, the Essenes, who were a species of recluses, affecting a very retired and austere mode of life. Diametrically opposed as the Pharisees and Herodians generally were, we find them here uniting in their council, to destroy the Son of God, and to put down his religion. The mutual complaisance, too, of Herod and Pilate, as they united in mocking the Saviour, greatly tended to cement their agreement:—"The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."* And thus in every age it has been found that unbelievers, and profane persons, and worldly men, however different, or even opposite, their opinions may be in other respects, all agree in opposing true evangelical scriptural religion. This should grieve, but let it not greatly surprise, and especially let it not stumble, the Christian. It is thus that nature and grace must ever be opposed to each other; therefore, when all these heterogeneous parties form a conspiracy against the truth, and become amalgamated into one, and take *their* side, let him neither be ashamed nor afraid to take *his*.

Our Lord was now exposed to eminent danger from the machinations of his combined enemies. His hour, however, was not yet come. Accordingly, as we are informed by the preceding evangelists, when Jesus knew the design on his life, "he withdrew himself from thence." He directed his disciples, in like manner, when persecuted in one city, to flee into another. We are thus instructed that though we are not to avoid sufferings, or death, by unfaithfulness, we are not rashly to run upon them, we are not to court them. We are bound to preserve our life, that precious gift, as long as we can with fidelity, that we may further serve God and man on earth. And then, when the inevitable hour of our trial arrives, we are not to shun it, but to meet it; and whether, after wasting sickness, we die a natural

* Luke xxiii. 12

death, or whether we fall by the hand of the persecutor, we are, for the sake of him who died for us, and in obedience to his will, and in confidence of his mercy, to lay down our life willingly and cheerfully.

Let us notice two or three sentiments suggested by the application of this miracle, to spiritual things, and then have done. Christ himself took occasion from some of the miracles he performed on the body—for example, from his restoring the dead to life, and the blind to sight—to turn the attention of the spectators to his saving work on the soul. We have here, then, in reference to certain doctrines, a fair ground, if not of positive argument, at least of analogical illustration. The case of the man with the withered hand affords an apt *emblem of the natural state of the human soul*, as it stands in relation to religious action—to the acceptable service of God. It is true, that while the former was a bodily and physical inability, the latter is a moral, a mental inability, consisting, in a great measure, in the perverted state of the will: but still the latter is a real inability, which cannot be overcome by any merely human exertion. Men are described in reference to religion, as “without strength.” Their “carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—They cannot please God.” Their powers are impaired: their hands are withered. Notwithstanding of this, they are commanded to believe, and repent and obey. Now, there are many who look on these two things as inconsistent with each other, and who err in rejecting either the one or the other. Thus, there are some who hold that men have power to believe and obey, else they would never be commanded to do so: while others, holding man’s total depravity, and helplessness, and inability, conclude that he ought not, in his unconverted state, to be exhorted to faith and obedience. But if we are to hold the whole truth, we must admit both the inability of man, and the reasonableness of the command. And indeed, whatever may be the points of difference, the case of this poor man corresponds sufficiently to bear us out in holding both. It is unquestionable that the man’s hand was completely withered and powerless, even though he was commanded to stretch it forth; and it is as certain that Jesus, knowing its benumbed state, did, notwithstanding, command him to use it. It would follow, on the principle of the objectors, that it was absurd to speak in that way to the man; Christ, however, did not think so: and who shall dare to charge him with absurdity? He spoke, and as already stated, his own power accompanying his word, that word was obeyed. So also he said effectually to the sick of the palsy, “Arise,” and even to Lazarus in the tomb, “Come forth.” Somewhat like this is the procedure in the giving of spiritual life, and healing, and strength. It is ours, under God, to give the command, or rather, his word gives the command to believe and serve the Lord. It is yours to give attention to that command, and to endeavour to comply with it. And it is

God's to give the increase, and to strengthen your withered hands.

To those of you who have not yet obeyed the call, we cannot say that you have strength to do so of yourselves: but we warn you against sitting down contented in indolence, with the saying: "We are not able;" for, this inability, being moral and voluntary, instead of being any excuse, constitutes the essence and the very worst part of your guilt. It is undeniably criminal if you are not willing to obey: and if you continue so, you must die in your sins, as the man with the withered hand, if he had not been willing to be healed, and had not endeavoured to stretch forth his hand, would, no doubt, have remained without a cure. We say further, that it is well you are within reach of the call, on the great day of healing, the Sabbath, and in the great place of healing, the sanctuary. Listen, then, to the voice of Jesus; and endeavour to stretch forth the withered hand. He is now saying: "Turn at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you." Say each of you with earnestness: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned: make thy grace sufficient for me, and perfect thy strength in my weakness." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and may "God work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

To those of you who have obeyed the Gospel call, and in so doing have been healed, and have had your faculties restored, we say, Be humble, and thankful, and active. The man, of whom we have been reading, could never think of taking the honour of his cure to himself; but you are as entirely indebted to the grace and power of the Saviour as he was. Give therefore to the Lord grateful and undivided praise. Recollect, too, that your strength is still in him; and that it is still true that of yourselves you can do nothing, though you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. Live, then, habitually in a dependence on the merit of his righteousness, and the aids of his Spirit. Thus "the joy of the Lord shall be your strength," and you will be encouraged to put forth whatever strength you have in his service.

LECTURE XXV.

LUKE VI. 12-14.

“ And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles. 14. Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother.”

OUR Lord had now been for a considerable time engaged in the public ministry of the kingdom of God, his discourses and miracles had produced a very strong and very general sensation, he was fully occupied with the work, and inviting opportunities of exertion presented themselves in every direction. It is true that he brought qualifications to the work, and prosecuted it with a wisdom and energy which could not have been found in any mere man: but as it was, in the nature of things, impossible that his bodily presence and personal instrumentality could be enjoyed in more than one place at a time, and as he was soon to withdraw from the earth altogether, he resolved to employ the agency of a number of properly qualified men, that the Gospel might be more rapidly published while he was yet below, and that when he should have ascended to his Father, the gracious cause which had brought him down to labour, and suffer, and die, might not want those by whom, under his own spiritual guidance and blessing, it might continue to be advocated and extended. In the prosecution of this purpose he proceeded in a most deliberate, solemn, and pious manner.

“ *It came to pass in those days,*” about the time when the miracle of curing the man with the withered hand in the synagogue, on the Sabbath, having so irritated his infatuated enemies that they plotted for his life, he had withdrawn to another place, had gone, according to Mark, * “with his disciples to the sea;” that is, to the sea of Galilee. Mark tells us that a great multitude came to him there.

“ *In those days he went out into a mountain to pray.*” The evangelists make frequent mention of Christ’s retiring from the society of men, and generally to a mountain, for the purpose of secret prayer. In this he left us an example that we should follow his steps. The exact nature of the place, indeed, is of little consequence; it matters not whether it be a mountain, or our closet, or any other convenient situation, where we are not exposed to interruption, where we are not under temptation of undue motives arising from our being seen of men, and where.

* Mark iii. 7.

we may without restraint pour out our hearts into the bosom of our God. An attentive consideration of our habits in this respect would furnish a good criterion of our state. Would not the almost entire neglect, or entire formality, of this service, convict some of us of complete irreligion? And would not the little attention the best of us pay to the frame in which the exercise is often engaged in by us, furnish matter of much humiliation and serious admonition? If the Saviour, in whom sin, Satan, and the world could find no materials whereon to operate, was so observant, and found the benefit of this duty, much more ought we, who are so liable to be injured by our intercourse with the world, to make conscience of attending to this obviously most likely means of promoting our spiritual welfare.

It is said that our Lord "*continued all night in prayer to God.*" The generality of critics are of opinion that this should be rendered, he "continued all night in an oratory of God," or *proseucha*, or "place for prayer." The meaning comes to be much the same in this way; but we are thus reminded of what is known from other sources to have been a custom among the Jews, namely, to have certain retired spots particularly set apart for the purpose of prayer. These were sometimes on the tops of mountains, and sometimes by the banks of rivers. They were sometimes small courts enclosed with a wall, and without roofs; and sometimes they were merely little spots surrounded with a few trees for shelter.* A place of this kind, and for this purpose, by a river-side, is thus mentioned by Luke, in describing what took place when he was at Philippi with Paul, in the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: "And on the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women who resorted thither." In some such place, probably, but on a mountain, our Lord spent the whole night in prayer. Jesus Christ not only prayed, but prayed with much fervour and frequently, and sometimes spent a long time in the exercise. "In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." It would be an overstrained interpretation of his example to suppose that we are bound to imitate his spending a whole night in prayer, in the letter; but to imitate him in the spirit of this is surely incumbent. We should "continue in prayer, and watch in the same." As to the length of time to be spent in private devotion, Christians seem to be very much at liberty to consult their own inclination, in connection with propriety; not being limited, as in social prayer, by a regard to the feelings of others. It would seem, however, from the example of Christ and the saints, that a considerable proportion of time ought to be dedicated to devotional exercises, especially on occasions of very peculiar interest. Some,

* "Ede ubi consistas, in qua te quero proseucha."—*Juvenal*, iii. 296.

Philo (against Flaccus) complains that *ai proseuchai* were demolished: and Josephus says the people were gathered *eis tyn proseuchan*.

from the nature of their employments, or from mental constitution, or habit, do not find that they can often continue, or profitably continue, long at devotion at once; such may supply this, in a good measure, by frequency. Most clearly, however, sufficient time ought to be taken to get the mind fully engaged. When Christ, after labouring the whole day that was past, and having also to labour as soon as day dawned again, spent the whole night in prayer, it is a shame for any of his professing followers, however busy a life they may lead, not to make a point of reserving from the cares of the day, or it may be, from the slumbers of the night, as much time as is necessary for morning and evening devotion. Mark, Christians, how the airy trifler gives the night-watch to devour the foolish romance; and how the pale student toils over the midnight lamp; and how, for the sake of this world's gain, some rise early and sit up late, and even work whole nights; and how the votaries of dissipating pleasure often spend the whole, or almost the whole, night in its pursuits; and then though you will by no means think yourselves called on literally to spend whole nights in prayer, yet you will be ashamed and confounded when you think that a moderate tarrying before the throne of grace should ever have been unnecessarily neglected by you, or felt as a burden; and you will desire to give somewhat more of your time, and much more of your hearts, to the stated and occasional seasons when you retreat from the world to commune with your God.

We are not told expressly what were the subjects which engaged our Lord in prayer during the night; yet the connection of the history, and the great importance of the appointment he was about to make, afford sufficient ground to believe that the subject of the calling and ordination of the apostles occupied an important place in his petitions. So, the interests of his Church still require that prayer should be offered up, not only for those who are already in the ministry, but also that fit individuals may be induced to come forward, and that those who are actually training for it may be duly qualified. We should all earnestly pray the Lord to send forth labourers, good and faithful labourers, into his vineyard: and miraculous gifts, as well as miraculous calls, being now no more, we should pray that he would regulate and bless "the schools of the prophets." We are here reminded, too, that earnest prayer should precede the appointment and ordination of ministers. Special and earnest prayer ought to be made for the qualifications needful for their office, and for success in it. Though Christ had power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, he set us an example to pray for it.

Having spent the night in prayer, our Lord, "*as soon as it was day, called unto him his disciples:*" or, as in Mark,* "*he calleth unto him whom he would,*" those whom he pleased—proceeding in this, as he does in the bestowing of every other favour, as the sovereign dispenser of his own gifts. "Ye have not chosen

* Mark iii. 13.

me," said he at another time, "but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." His disciples came to him, and out "*of them he chose twelve, whom he also named apostles.*" The expression in Mark is, "he ordained," or, as it might have been more exactly rendered, "he made, or constituted, twelve." It does not appear, though it is possible, that, as some suppose, our Lord ordained them formally by prayer, and the imposition of hands. The word *apostle*, signifies one sent forth, or a messenger. It is applied to a person sent out on any errand whatever, and is much the same with the general meaning of the word *angel*. Thus we read of the angels—that is, the messengers, or ministers of the Churches. More particularly, it is applied to Jesus himself, who, as descriptive of his divine mission into the world, is called the "Messenger of the covenant," and the "Apostle and High Priest of our profession." Sometimes it is used in a sense that includes any of the more celebrated ministers, or those who were commissioned on particular occasions, as in 2 Cor. viii. 23: "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper, concerning you; or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers," or apostles, "of the Churches, and the glory of Christ." Most commonly, however, the word *apostles* is used for the twelve disciples set apart by our Lord at this time. They were twelve in number, probably in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel, for whom the fixing on this particular number was probably intended as a mark of respect and regard. A reference to this number of the tribes in connection with the apostles, and also as descriptive of the Church of God in general, is made in several places; as when our Lord said: "Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel:" thus, also, according to John's vision, the heavenly Jerusalem "had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

Observe here, that these twelve were disciples before they were chosen to be apostles. One of them, for reasons which may be noticed afterwards, was put among the apostles, though he was not a genuine disciple: but still he was a professed disciple, and bore the character of a disciple. From this we learn that there should be a credible profession of religion, besides other qualifications, before any be admitted by others to the ministry, and that it is shameful hypocrisy and presumption for any to thrust themselves forward, or even to accept of the office, who are destitute of gospel faith and holiness.

The purposes for which the twelve were appointed are thus mentioned by Mark: First, "that they should be with him;" that is, continue constantly with Christ, that they might have every opportunity of being instructed in his gospel, and of see-

ing, that they might afterwards bear evidence to his wonderful works. He ordained them, secondly, that “he might send them forth to preach”—employ them as the principal preachers of his gospel; and “to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils”—to work many miracles, in order to excite the attention and to obtain the credit of those to whom they might address themselves. It is to be observed that this is the account of their election and appointment to the apostleship, not of their actual mission, which took place some time after, and an account of which we have in the beginning of the 9th chapter. So, it is greatly to be desired that all who succeed them in the ministry should be men who have “intimately known Christ themselves, and have been accustomed to spiritual converse with him, that they may with the greater ability, zeal, and efficacy, recommend him to others.”*

As the apostles were afterwards sent out by two and two, so they are here mentioned by pairs. There are three pairs of brothers—Peter and Andrew; James the greater, and John; the other James, or James the less, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus, also called Judas, or Jude. It is truly delightful when those who are brothers by blood are also brothers by grace. The attachment between such is most endearing and most Christian. Hast thou a brother who is such a brother to thee? bless God for him, and cherish him as thine own soul. Hast thou a brother who is not what could be desired? spare no judicious pains, and no earnest prayers, to gain him.

And what an interesting list is this which now presents itself to our view! Whatever may be the judgment of those who are led by the glare and tinsel of this vain and wicked world, there is no such catalogue of names as this to be found in the compass of history. They are far greater than the twelve Cæsars. Instead of lessening, it increaseth their fame, that they were generally of lowly station. Speaking of them with a solitary exception, they were sinners saved by grace, and happy in the love of God and in the consciousness of his love. They were honoured with the company and confidence of the Prince of the kings of the earth; and their actions and their teaching have had a more permanent, more extensive, and more blessed influence of the opinions, the character, the happiness, and the destiny of mankind, than those of the most illustrious philosophers, legislators, kings, and conquerors the world ever saw.—There are four lists given us of the names of the apostles—one in each of the three first Gospels, and one in the 1st chapter of the Acts. These lists all differ from each other in some minute circumstances, easily explained; and particularly in the order of the names, so that we are not to suppose that they are curiously arranged with the view of settling the rank and precedence of the apostles. Whatever superiority any of them had above the rest, was a superiority of attainments, graces, and

services, and not a superiority of office, for in this respect they were equal. Peter and Andrew are, indeed, always put first; and they may have obtained that honour as being the first who were called to be disciples. Peter is generally understood to have been the elder of the two brothers, and therefore placed before Andrew; and there can be no question that, though Peter had no superiority of office, he was a much more celebrated character than most of the apostles.

As we have here a complete catalogue of the apostles, I shall, in considering it, take an opportunity of giving *a brief sketch of some of the principal parts of their history, as far as it is known from Scripture, or generally considered sufficiently authenticated from other sources.* And first of Peter.

“*Peter*” was born in Bethsaida, a town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Gennesaret, in the district of Upper Galilee. He was the son of Jonas, or Jonah, of whom we read nothing more; and he was by trade a fisherman. He was brought, by his brother Andrew, to Christ; the result of which introduction he would ever gratefully remember. His original name was Simon, the same with Simeon; which, since the time of Jacob’s son of that name, was a common name among the Jews, and signified, “hearing,” or “he that hears.” When he was brought to our Lord, he told him that he was to be called by the new name of *Cephas*—the word in Syriac (a dialect which was the vulgar language at the time) for a stone or rock, as expressive of the firmness and decision of his character. Cephas, rendered into Greek, gives our word “Peter.” He was a married man, as is expressly said by Paul, and as appears from the account we have of his wife’s mother being miraculously cured of a fever by Christ. He appears to have pursued his original occupation for some time after his introduction to Christ; but when formally called, on a memorable occasion, along with three other disciples, he left his nets, forsook all, and followed him. We have already noticed his appointment to the apostleship. Equal in rank, he surpassed most, perhaps all, of the twelve, in zeal; though sometimes his zeal degenerated into rashness. A few of the many striking occasions on which he came prominently forward may here be noticed. When Christ was walking on the water to the ship in which the disciples were, Peter, having asked and obtained permission, left the ship, and began to walk on the water to meet his Lord; but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and began to sink, and cried out, “Lord, save me;” on which Jesus “stretched forth his hands, and caught him, and said unto him: O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” From this part of his history we learn, that we should not unnecessarily expose ourselves to dangers and temptations; that Christ sometimes allows his people to have their own choice in such cases, to humble them and prove them; that, even in the most dangerous circumstances, if we be strong in the faith, we shall proceed with

confidence and safety ; that if, when turning away our eyes from Christ, we fix them on the difficulties and terrors with which we are surrounded, we shall feel as if we were ready to fall and to sink ; that if, when beginning to sink, we call on him, he will uphold us ; and that, though he will rebuke the weak believer, he will never leave him to perish.

When many of those who had been following Christ became offended at some of his doctrines, and went back and walked no more with him, and he then said to the twelve : “ Will ye also go away ? ” it was Simon Peter who thus nobly spoke out, and replied for himself and the rest : “ Lord, to whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” And much in the same spirit, when our Lord, after hearing the different opinions which were entertained of himself, said to the disciples : “ Whom say ye that I am ? ” Simon Peter answered and said, “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was immediately on this reply that Jesus addressed to him the most gracious words : “ Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonas,” or son of Jonah ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say unto thee, Thou art Peter ; ” and then—in direct and principal reference to the grand truth of his Messiahship, as the groundwork of the gospel, and, probably, with some allusion also to the name Peter, though certainly not as if Peter had any exclusive privilege, or was to be considered as a foundation in any other sense than that inferior sense in which all the apostles and prophets were a foundation—Jesus added, “ Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” And then he subjoined the following words, which, though by no means peculiar or personal to Peter, to the exclusion of the rest of the apostles, or furnishing any warrant to any pretended successors to lay claim to infallibility, or blasphemously to assert the prerogatives of the Almighty, are yet very honourable to Peter and the rest of his colleagues, as showing them to be possessed of power to announce the doctrine and manage the discipline of the Church, and that, too, backed with the authoritative assurance that whatever they should thus do should be ratified in God’s courts above—he subjoined : “ I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Peter was obviously one of Christ’s most intimate friends. It has been remarked, that, even out of the twelve, Christ chose a triumvirate, or three men, who appear to have been peculiarly in his confidence—namely, Peter, James, and John. Peter, along with these two, was honoured to witness our Lord’s transfiguration on the mount ; and it was he who then said, at once with much good feeling and with much inconsideration :

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." To this occurrence Peter thus afterwards referred with much pleasure and confidence: "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."* In like manner, Peter was one of the three who went with our Lord when he raised Jairus' daughter; and who accompanied him into the garden of Gethsemane, on the occasion of his agony, when he had to say to all the three, and especially to Peter: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?"

Among the circumstances which betokened his affection for the Saviour, but which at the same time betrayed much ignorance, and a very culpable want of respectful submission, is that, when, in reference to our Lord's speaking of his own death, "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;" and when our Lord addressed him in these sharp words: "Get thee behind me, Satan," or adversary; "thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." The greatest blot, however, in all his character is well known to be that, when, after having declared that though all men should deny Christ, yet would not he, but that he was ready to go with him to prison and to death, and that though he should die with him, yet would he not deny him; he, notwithstanding all this, soon after repeatedly denied him in the most solemn manner, and cursed and swore saying: "I know not the man." What a fall was here! How directly does it tend to do away that idolatrous regard with which Peter is viewed by the Romanists! What a lesson is it to Christians to beware of the causes which led to his disgrace—self-confidence, false shame, cowardice, and evil company! and what a warning is it to every one that thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall! But, as his fall was great, so his repentance was deep, and the tokens of his complete restoration to the favour of his Lord were most satisfactory. Jesus, after his resurrection, seems to have studiously embraced opportunities of noticing him: "He was seen of Cephas, and then of the twelve." He thrice put the question to him: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and thrice Peter replied, if not in the very same words, yet to the same purpose: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee;" on which our Lord graciously said to him: "Feed my Lambs, feed my sheep." What an encouragement is here for the offending disciple to return, in the

* 2 Pet. i. 16.

renewed exercise of penitence and faith, to his most compassionate and forgiving Lord!

To omit many other interesting particulars recorded in the Gospels, let us glance at a few of the chief which are stated in the Acts of the Apostles, for a single hint will be enough to bring much to the remembrance of those who are in any considerable degree conversant with Scripture. It was Peter who stood up in the midst of the disciples in Jerusalem, and proposed the election of a new apostle in the room of Judas. It was Peter who preached the powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost, recorded in the 2d chapter. He is declared, as well as the other apostles, to have wrought many miracles, several of which are particularized. His concern in the case of Cornelius is very interesting, as showing him to have been the first who introduced the gospel among the Gentiles; and he afterwards boldly and satisfactorily defended that procedure in the midst of the disciples. He visited Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Cæsarea, Antioch and other places. On one occasion, we read of him temporizing, so that Paul withstood him to the face, "because he was to be blamed." But he was, in general, faithful and noble-minded. In the grand council at Jerusalem, on the subject of the obligation of the ceremonial law, he took a prominent and decisive lead in maintaining the liberty of the Gentile converts. For the cause of Christ, he cheerfully endured disgrace, scourging, and imprisonment.

As Peter promoted the gospel by his preaching, so he also promoted it by his writings. He wrote two Epistles, which have come down to us: they are addressed—the first, to the believing strangers scattered abroad through certain parts of the world; and the second, to all "who had obtained like precious faith." These Epistles are teeming with matter of the most vital and delightful interest. His second letter was evidently written under the vivid impression that his death was at hand. "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle," says he, "to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." He here refers to what Christ said to him, as recorded in the last chapter of John's Gospel: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

Hitherto we have had the infallible record of God's own Word to guide us; but farther it does not conduct us. A great number of additional and minute particulars are related by early uninspired writers, concerning Peter, and the other apostles. Of these circumstances, many bear the mark of improbability and superstition on their face, and some are directly contradictory

to what is contained in Scripture. But that all these relations are fabulous, it would be a very unreasonable extreme to suppose. In many, perhaps in most cases, it is impossible to separate, with certainty, the true from the fabulous, yet there are some leading points which may be considered as almost certain. It was foretold by our Lord that Peter was to suffer martyrdom. Without vouching, then, for the particulars of his martyrdom as given by different writers, many of which, however, are sufficiently probable and very affecting, there seems no reason to doubt that, after labouring in various parts of the world, and arriving at a good old age, Peter suffered martyrdom at or near Rome, by crucifixion, and, according to his own earnest request, was crucified with his head downwards, as judging himself unworthy to die in the same posture with his blessed Lord.

Thus lived and thus died unquestionably the most remarkable of the original twelve apostles. There was a black stain, indeed, in his life, but it was gloriously wiped away at last. Nero, the bloody tyrant, pursued him to the cross, but he could follow him no farther. Simon Peter nobly exemplified his own precept: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." He passed from the cross of torture and ignominy to the crown of life and glory; and now, joined to the noble army of martyrs, who, having come through much tribulation, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, he is before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple. His history furnishes us with a caution against precipitance, self-confidence, and some other evils, and with a pattern of zeal, and love, and many other excellencies. Let us be on our guard against the one, and copy the other; and let us see to it that we carefully study and cordially embrace that divine system of religion on which he rested all his hope, and for which he thought it not too much to die.

The history of the second person in this catalogue, even though more fully given by us, as far as it is known, will be sooner told. "*Andrew*" was a native of Bethsaida also, and Peter's brother, in whose house he seems to have lived.* The Word of God is sparing in the account of him, containing only a few notices. He was by trade a fisherman. This his only name is Greek, and signifies, "manly," or "a strong man." From the 1st chapter of John, it appears that Andrew had enjoyed the benefit of the Baptist's instructions. He was one of the two of his disciples (who the other was does not certainly appear) who were standing with John the Baptist, when, looking on Jesus, John said: "Behold the Lamb of God." On Christ's invitation, to which their inquiry after his residence gave rise, Andrew, and that other disciple, came and saw where Jesus dwelt, and "abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour," or four o'clock in the afternoon: so they spent the remainder of

* Mark i. 29.

the day with Jesus, and, we may be sure, in very edifying and delightful conversation. Charmed with the discovery he had made, and the acquaintance he had formed, Andrew sought, as soon as possible, to bring others to Christ: and first of all, as formerly stated, he brought his own brother Simon. Let us imitate Andrew in desiring to know more of Christ, and in cheerfully accepting his invitation to come and see, and hear, and abide with him: and if the grace of God have savingly discovered Christ to us, let us endeavour to bring others, and especially our own relations, to a saving acquaintance with him. Like his brother Peter, Andrew was called from his nets to follow Christ habitually, and ultimately chosen to the apostleship.

When Jesus,* in order to try the disciples (for he himself knew what he was to do), asked whence they should buy bread to give the multitude to eat, "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes." He immediately discovered all the provisions that belonged to his party; and without distrust for themselves, cheerfully consented to their being distributed among the multitude as far as they would go; a pattern thus far to us of trust in Providence, and of charity. "But," added he, "what are they among so many?" It never occurred to him with what ease he who was possessed of divine power, and fed the Israelites in the wilderness, and had performed many wonders before Andrew's own eyes, could make these few loaves and fishes sufficient for his purpose. While we are ready to do all we can for the supply of the temporal and spiritual wants of our fellow-creatures, let us cherish enlarged views of the power and bounty of God's providence and grace; and we may hope that he will still continue to "multiply the seed sown, and increase the fruits of our righteousness," that the whole may be "abundant by many thanksgivings unto God."

In the 12th chapter of John, there is a case mentioned in which Andrew acted with much propriety. There were certain Greeks come up to Jerusalem to worship, at the feast, who were anxious to become acquainted with Christ, and to be instructed by him, and who, with that view, applied to Philip, saying: "Sir, we would see Jesus." It ought to be our chief aim in going up to his courts, to see more of him, to discover more fully the suitableness and glory of his character and work. We lose our labour in such cases, if we do not see Jesus. Philip, however, having heard Christ say that he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, hesitated about the propriety of complying with the request of those Gentiles, and would not venture to proceed without consultation. "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus," who is believed to have received the strangers, and to have proceeded to discourse in their hearing. It is good for Christians, and especially for ministers, to consult with each

* John vi. 8.

other when they are at a loss how to act; and it is good to inform their Lord by prayer, that he may, as it were, decide for them. It is good, also, for ministers to hold familiar and confidential intercourse, for thus they may be helpful in a general way to one another. And more particularly, when interesting cases occur of people beginning to inquire after Christ, their ministers may sometimes, with much benefit, prudently converse about them together: thus they will be mutually encouraged, and will grow in ministerial experience themselves; and thus they will be more likely to be instrumental in effectually bringing their inquirers to the Saviour.

When our Lord had foretold the utter ruin of the temple, Andrew was one of the four disciples who asked him privately, as he sat upon the mount of Olives, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" On this, our Lord took occasion, not indeed to gratify their curiosity about the times and seasons which the Father had put in his own power, but to discourse on the two grand subjects of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, in a way admirably calculated to edify and impress. The last mention of Andrew is in the 1st chapter of the Acts, where his name is introduced among the eleven, who are represented as usually meeting together in an upper room, where, with some other disciples, "they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." It is thus that the people of Christ should ever study to be of one heart, and one mind, and to assist each other by mutual intercourse, conference, and prayer; for thus they will most effectually promote his cause around them; and, however troubled the state of the Church may be without, they will have peace within, and be happy in communion with God and each other.

These, I believe, are all the notices of Andrew contained in Scripture. They are few and brief, but they are amply sufficient to show him to have had the Spirit of Christ, and to have been one of his, not only by outward call and commission, but also by special and saving grace. He left no writings behind him.

It is generally agreed among the ancient Christian writers, that some time after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the apostles determined by lot, with prayer to God, into what quarter of the world each of them was to go, for the purpose of proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation. Scythia and the neighbouring countries are said to have fallen to Andrew. To these he repaired, and in these he for some time preached; but afterwards he laboured in various other parts of the world, till, according to the ecclesiastical historians, Nicephorus and Eusebius, and general consent, he at last came to Petræ, a city of Achaia, or the Morea, a province of Greece. There his zeal and success in propagating the gospel, and his firmness in resisting all attempts to make him abjure Christ, and do sacrifice to the gods, so enraged the Roman proconsul, that he gave sen-

tence that he should be first scourged, and then crucified. Seven successive lictors whipped his naked body ; after which he was bound with cords to a cross, on which he was suffered to hang till he died. The following is part of an encomium which one of the ancient Christians passes on him : “ Andrew was the first-born of the apostolic quire ; the prime pillar of the Church ; a rock before the rock ; the first-fruits of the beginning. He preached that gospel which was not yet believed, or entertained ; he revealed and made known that life to his brother, which he had not yet perfectly learned himself. So great treasures did that one question bring him : ‘ Master, where dwellest thou ? ’ which he soon perceived by the answer given him, and which he deeply pondered in his mind : ‘ Come and see. ’ How art thou become a prophet ? whence thus divinely skilful ? what is it thou soundest in Peter’s ears ? (‘ We have found the Messiah ’) why dost thou attempt to compass him whom thou canst not comprehend ? how can he be found who is omnipresent ? But he well knew what he said. We have found him whom Adam lost, whom Eve injured, whom the clouds of sin have hidden from us, and whom our transgressions had hitherto made a stranger to us. ” Andrew found him as bearing the general character of the expected Messiah, and he found him in that sense, in which happy shall we be too, my friends, if we find him—he found him for himself ; he found him, as the one all-sufficient object of his trust and of his affection : he won Christ, and was found in him ; he knew him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. And after living, and labouring, and dying for his name, he left the proconsul, and the lictors, and all his sorrows behind him ; and in the open vision and full enjoyment of heaven, he found him whom His soul loved—and so shall he ever be with the Lord.

LECTURE XXVI.

LUKE VI. 14.

“ James and John, Philip.”

HAVING considered, in the last Lecture, the solemn circumstances accompanying the election of the twelve apostles, we entered on a sketch of the history of the individuals whose names compose the illustrious catalogue. We were only able to take a review of the first pair, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother. James and John form the second pair, and we shall proceed to the history of *James*. James is originally the same name with Jacob : it was first borne by the son of Isaac, and signifies “ the supplanter.”

This *James* now commonly bears the surname of the *Greater*, or *Elder*, to distinguish him from the other James, who is called James the Less, or the Younger. James the Greater was the brother of the apostle John. They were the sons of Zebedee, who was a fisherman. Their call to follow Christ is thus described by Matthew :* “ And going on from thence,” that is, from the place where he had called Peter and Andrew, Christ “ saw other two brethren, James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets ; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.” And what is Jesus Christ still doing, every time we hear him speaking to us from his Word, but calling us to follow him as our Lord ? God grant that we may all feel the constraining energy, and bend to the authority of that call. May we be called off from every undue attachment even to the lawful business of life ; and should we be called on to differ from, or forsake, the dearest relations, and to part with our all, for his sake, may we be enabled to do so without hesitation, remembering that those who love father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, more than him, are not worthy of him ; whereas those who part with all for him, shall receive an hundred-fold now in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting. But whether we be exposed to such outward trials, or not, let us at least cultivate that inward spirit of weanedness from created objects, which always, more or less, characterizes, and which so well becomes, those who have given themselves to the Lord, and taken him for their portion.

* Matt. iv. 21.

The mother of James and John was Salome, as is satisfactorily ascertained by comparing the two following passages : In Matthew xxvii. 56, we read that among the women who had followed Christ, ministering unto him, and were beholding his crucifixion from a distance, were " Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children," which children were unquestionably James and John. But in Mark xv. 40, there are mentioned, as being present on the same occasion, these two Marys, and Salome. Salome, therefore, was the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of these two apostles. We may notice, in this connection, the following account of an affair in which Salome took the lead, and in which her two sons participated.* " Then came to him" (to Christ) " the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;" and then he goes on to inform them that the rank, the comparative glory, would be assigned by his heavenly Father on different principles from what they were imagining, and that those would be most glorious who most excelled in holiness, services, and humility. But, to notice only what in this passage bears most immediately on the case of James and John;—they here betrayed much ignorance of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, much of an improper spirit of vain and worldly ambition, and much thoughtless self-confidence; and they had it distinctly notified to them that they were to drink largely of the cup of suffering, after Christ's example, and for his sake.

James and John were much distinguished by the peculiar friendship and favour of Jesus Christ. They and Peter alone, of all the apostles, were present at our Lord's transfiguration, at his restoring Jairus' daughter to life, and at his agony in the garden. We are told, in Mark iii. 17, that Christ " surnamed them" (James and John) " Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder." There is some uncertainty as to the exact derivation of the word Boanerges, and also as to the reason why they were so described. Some have thought they were thus named because they proposed to call down fire, or lightning, which is generally accompanied with thunder, from heaven; and, no doubt, that was a specimen of their keenness of temper, but it was such a specimen as was, on the whole, unfavourable to their character; and therefore, it is hardly to be supposed that Christ would have marked them by a name which was intended

* Matt. xx. 20.

to keep that circumstance in view. The common opinion seems the just one, that they were so named because they were distinguished, or because Christ foresaw that they were to be distinguished, for the powerful preaching of the word, for energy, divine eloquence, and victorious efficacy, in addressing men's consciences, convincing them of their need of salvation, and urging on them the acceptance of the gospel. Different degrees of this energy have in every age been possessed by different ministers, as seems to have been the case even among the apostles; but it is in some degree characteristic of all who faithfully declare the truth, in a dependence on the divine blessing. "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Is not the difference great? and may it not easily be distinguished? Let the message from God be but fully, plainly, and faithfully delivered, and its authority will soon be more or less acknowledged, and its power felt. The real word of God, sounded out by his servants, and sent home by his Spirit, enlightens, awakens, alarms, softens, humbles, quickens: "It is as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." "It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." May there be many such Boanerges! for surely nothing less than a peal of thunder seems calculated to rouse sinners from their lethargy. Yet the Lord can give efficacy to the humblest instruments. Whatever be the peculiar genius, or gifts, of his faithful ministers, may their number be great, and their success great; may he condescend to make still more effectual use of every one of them; and may every one of them have reason, in his own measure, to say, with the greatest of all preachers: "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me."

We have no certain account of the life of this James after the apostles were "endued with power from on high." There are traditionary accounts of his labouring in parts of the world distant from Judea, which, however, are not received as authentic. It is certain that he did not live long, and he is allowed to have been the first of the apostles who suffered martyrdom, being put to death probably in the forty-third or forty-fourth year of the Christian era.

The account of his death is thus briefly given at the beginning of the 12th chapter of the Acts: "Now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword;" that is, caused him to be beheaded with the sword. "And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded farther to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread." This was Herod Agrippa, who had been made tetrarch of Galilee

by the emperor Caligula, and afterwards king of Judea, and some neighbouring countries, by the emperor Claudius. This Herod was a great courtier, and a deep politician. He was a strict observer of the Mosaic law. Desirous to ingratiate himself with the Jews, he began with subjecting some of the Christians to various vexations, and less violent kinds of persecution, and at last sacrificed to the same base object a noble victim in the person of James. The vengeance of God soon overtook the perpetrator of this horrid deed—a vengeance which, in one shape or other, has so generally pursued those who have trode in his footsteps, that there is a treatise ascribed to the Christian father Lactantius, entitled, “Concerning the Death of the Persecutors.” As for this Herod, there is a particular and highly wrought account of his death by Josephus; but nothing can be more striking than the inspired account we have in the same chapter which states the martyrdom of James: “Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

Precious in the Lord’s sight is the death of all his saints, and especially precious must have been that of a faithful apostle. The removal, at so early a period, of one of those who were looked to as the chief propagators of the gospel, was, in itself, a very distressing and dark dispensation. God would not permit such an event, but for important reasons. Of these reasons some are obvious. This event had the effect of making most of the apostles provide for their safety by removing to distant parts, where they preached the word: it was an example to the other apostles of what they might expect, and how they should conduct themselves: it was one of the many proofs given of the sincerity of the belief of the first publishers of the gospel, their testimony to which so many of them sealed with their blood: and it would, in all probability, at the very time, be the means of the conversion of some who witnessed it, or were acquainted with its circumstances. Eusebius,* on the authority of Clemens, says, that when the man who had accused James saw him nobly confessing, he was so moved by his constancy, as to declare himself also to be a Christian, so that they were both led away to be put to death. When they were on the way to the place where they were to suffer, the man entreated James to forgive him for the part he had acted towards him; on which James said, “Peace be to thee,” and kissed him. They were then beheaded together. Thus died the first apostolic martyr, nobly and cheerfully. And thus it appeared at last that, though not in his own strength, yet in the strength of his Master, he was able to drink of the cup of which he drank, and to be bap-

* Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. 9.

tized with the baptism with which he was baptized. He left no writings behind him.

A considerable part of the history of the apostle *John* is so interwoven with that of his brother James, that it has been already told, and need not be repeated. The name John, or Johanan, signifies "the grace of the Lord." John is said by the ancients to have been by much the youngest of all the apostles; and this acquires probability from the advanced period of the Church to which he is known to have lived. He is often called "the beloved disciple." He repeatedly speaks of himself with much humility, yet evidently with much satisfaction, in the third person, and under the title of "The disciple whom Jesus loved." Christ loves all his disciples, but some of them are dearer to him than others. Daniel was "a man greatly beloved." So John was peculiarly dear to Christ. He loved him freely at first; and then loved him, though still freely, yet with complacency, because of the graces he had bestowed on him. He appears, also, to have felt strongly for him the affection of human friendship: and all know that he admitted him, as already mentioned, to be near his person on some very interesting occasions. Perhaps John's youth may have drawn forth the Saviour's peculiar tenderness: and the circumstance that the beloved disciple was the youngest, should be very encouraging to all who desire to devote themselves to Christ in early life. "I love them," says he, "that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me." As John was beloved himself, so the whole tenor of his life and writings shows him to have been of a very affectionate disposition, and to have been full of love to God and Christ, and the brethren and all men. In this most winning and most Christian feature of his character, let it be our habitual study to resemble him.

That was a distinguishing mark of our Lord's regard for John,* when, as he himself expresses it, he was privileged to "lean on Jesus' bosom" at the paschal supper, or to recline next to him, and on his right hand, at the table. It was on this occasion that, when Peter, wishing to know who was intended by our Lord when he foretold that one of the disciples was to betray him, beckoned to John, intimating a wish that he would ask Christ. John then "lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" on which our Lord, by a certain sign, gave him to know the traitor. The more intimate fellowship any of Christ's disciples have with him, the more should they be filled with lowly reverence, as John, in the enjoyment of such intimacy, humbly said, "Lord, who is it?" This circumstance also suggests the propriety of our requesting the intercession of those who are peculiarly near and dear to the Lord.

John loved the Saviour because he had first loved him, and he testified his regard by various proofs of his affection and constancy. It is true that when Christ was apprehended, John,

* John xiii. 23, xxi. 20.

as well as the other disciples, forsook him and fled: but he soon recovered his courage and returned. Many think that John was the disciple alluded to * as having gone in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest, and that he witnessed the whole of the mock-trial and other cruelties and indignities to which Christ was exposed. It is at least certain that he was present at our Lord's crucifixion;† and for any thing that appears to the contrary, he was the only apostle then present. "When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son:" as if he had said, I am leaving thee, but behold one whom thou art to love with the affection of a mother for my sake, and who will act the part of a kind son to thee. And to John he said, "Behold thy mother"—Behold her whom, for my sake, thou art to love and succour with all the affection and care due to a mother by her own son; and to thee I thus bequeath her. "And from that hour" (her husband Joseph being dead) John "took her to his own house." It would be difficult to conceive what more honourable testimony of the Saviour's regard to John could have been given, than he thus gave, in intrusting to his care the individual who, of earthly connections, was most dear to him. As to the beloved disciple, we might almost be disposed to envy him the privilege conferred on him. And yet is not something very like all this constantly taking place? In the person of all who believe in Christ and love him, and do the will of his Father in heaven, and especially when they are destitute and afflicted, we may see those whom we ought to love, and cherish as our dearest friends; and we then may suppose we hear Jesus saying: Behold thy mother, and brother, and sister, for they are also mine; and inasmuch as ye do any thing to them, ye do it unto me.

When our Lord's resurrection was reported to Peter and John, they both ran together toward the sepulchre; and John outran Peter, being the younger and the more alert, and came first to the sepulchre. He stooped down and looked in, but did not go in at first. When Peter, however, had come up, and gone in, John went in also, "and he saw and believed." John was one of the party to whom Jesus showed himself at the Sea of Tiberias, as we read in the last chapter of his Gospel. After the account of what Christ said to Peter, and of the prediction of that apostle's martyrdom, which we considered on a former occasion, John introduces the following passage:—"Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter, seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?"—what as to this man?—and what shall be his end? Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that

* John xviii. 15.

† John xix. 26.

disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple who testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." It is true that it would have been of little consequence to Peter though John should have lived till Christ came to judgment; but by his coming, he probably meant, in this place, his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type of the end of the world: and he thus intimated that John was to live till after that event, which he accordingly did. It has been often observed that as John was the only one of the four evangelists who lived and wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, so he is the only one of them who gives no particular account of our Lord's prophecy of that awful event: which is wisely ordered, as had it been otherwise, some specious ground might have been afforded to infidels to object that it was, in fact, no prophecy but a history.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that John joined with Peter in curing a lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. And as it was foretold that he was to drink of the cup of Christ's sufferings, this now began to be fulfilled, though he was preserved to the last from absolute martyrdom. He was cast into prison along with Peter: and, together with the other apostles, he suffered shame, and was threatened and scourged by the Jewish rulers.* In company with Peter, he was sent by the college of apostles to Samaria, to confirm the converts there and to pray for them, and bestow on them the gift of the Holy Ghost. For a long time John appears to have laboured chiefly in Jerusalem. Writing to the Galatians, † Paul describes John as one of the "pillars" of the Church.

Ecclesiastical history furnishes various particulars of John's life after this time, several of which are generally received as authentic. It is believed, that after the lapse of some years, he left Jerusalem, and went into Asia, where he was the chief instrument of founding and establishing several churches. During his stay in that part of the world, he resided chiefly at Ephesus. It is also generally credited that in the reign of Domitian, that cruel and persecuting emperor, he was ordered up to Rome, where his life was miraculously preserved, when he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil. But whatever may be thought of this, we are sure he suffered banishment for the gospel's sake, into Patmos, an island in the Ægean Sea, or Archipelago. These are his own words in the Revelation (i. 9): "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Having been nearly two years in Patmos, John left it in consequence of the decree of Nerva, recalling those who had been banished by his predecessor. John returned to Ephesus, where it is said he lived to a great age. The pleasing circumstance

* Acts iv. 3, v. 40.

† Gal. ii. 9.

is related, that when he had become too feeble to walk, he used to be carried to the assembly of the faithful, where he from time to time repeated, when he could say no more, his own beautiful and favourite exhortation: "Little children, love one another." At last he died in peace; being the only one of the apostles who died a natural death.

His writings are five in number. His Gospel was written long after the other three Gospels, and was intended not only to supply various circumstances omitted in them, but to be an antidote to the heresies of the Gnostics, and others who, it appears, had very early departed from the genuine doctrines of the gospel, especially the doctrine of the real divinity of Christ. His First Epistle is called a general epistle, as it is not addressed to any particular person or persons. Nowhere in Scripture is there more earnestly inculcated full confidence in the love of God through the blood of Christ, and nowhere is there more clearly taught, or more importunately pressed on the practical regard of professors of religion, the intimate, the inseparable connection between genuine confidence and a holy temper and conduct. In his Second Epistle he testified his Christian regard for a certain pious matron and her children; and his Third Epistle is addressed, in a similar kind strain, to Gaius. His Revelation was written, or at least given, when he was in exile in Patmos; and though it is placed last, it seems to have been the first of his writings in point of time. Besides the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia and some other things, it contains a prophecy of the history of the Church, and of the world, from the date of its being given, till the consummation of all things. Nay, it removes, as it were, the veil that hangs between earth and heaven, and gives us a view of the glory within. It is indeed a book most beautiful and most sublime.

In John, then, we contemplate an advanced Christian, an evangelist in the strictest sense, an illustrious apostle, and what among the twelve apostles, is almost peculiar to himself, a great prophet, in the sense of predicting future events. There is much in his history which lies beyond the sphere of our attainments, and almost of our imitation; but there is much in it in which we must resemble him, if we would reach that glory which he now possesses on high, and which he so delightfully described when he was on earth. We must resemble him in his faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness. We must be able, while we are yet in this world, heartily to join in his ascription of glory and dominion unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, if we are ever to join in the song of the redeemed in the other world: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

The next mentioned in this honourable catalogue is "*Philip*." The name Philip is a Greek name, signifying, "fond of horses," or warlike; and it does not appear that this apostle had any

other name. Though Peter and Andrew were introduced to Christ, and were disciples in a certain sense before Philip, yet he was the first who had a formal call from Christ constantly to attend on him. The circumstances which accompanied and followed his call are recorded in the 1st chapter of John, from the 43d verse: "The day following," that is, the day after Peter's introduction to our Lord, "Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me." This disciple was called immediately by Christ himself, and not directed to him by another person, as Andrew was by John the Baptist, and as Peter was by Andrew. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same Lord: various means are employed to bring men to Christ, but it is still his own work. The usual words our Lord employed were accompanied, as usual, with his divine power, and were, as usual, instantly obeyed. "Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." No sooner was Philip himself effectually called, than he felt a desire to instruct others, and to bring others to the Lord: and so it is with all who have known the grace of God in truth. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Philip was well acquainted with the Old Testament writings, and was thereby more readily led to see the divine mission of Christ: so a similar acquaintance with these writings will, under God, be of much use to us; if well versed in them, we shall find that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus; and the law will be our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Though Nathanael was a truly pious man, one who was "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile," yet he displayed an unreasonable prejudice on this occasion. He said to Philip: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If his meaning was that Messiah, that good gift, that best of gifts, could not come out of Nazareth, he was so far right that he could not have been born there. Perhaps Philip's ignorance, or inattention, in not explaining that Christ, though he then resided in Nazareth, was born in Bethlehem, may, in part, have led Nathanael to express himself thus. And so it is that not only absolute departures from the truth, but partial views of it, or important omissions, are in danger of leading others into error. If Nathanael meant that no good thing whatever could come out Nazareth, bad as that town was, he laboured under a prejudice unreasonable and unjustifiable; but his prejudice is not without many parallels. There are prejudices even against the most exemplary followers of Christ, and the very essence of the Gospel itself, so inveterate and so fatal, as to keep some in a state of decided rejection of the faith. There are prejudices, too, of a less important kind, which considerably interfere with the progress and comfort of good people, and which are very unworthy of them. Let us be on our guard against the uncharitableness and bigotry of supposing that all

good is confined to our own nation, or our own party; or that in any place men are so worthless that no good can ever be found among them, and that the grace of God can do nothing for them. Philip did not enter into any long discussion with the view of removing Nathanael's unreasonable prejudice, but contented himself by simply saying to him: "Come and see:" he invited him to come and to get acquainted with Christ, to consider well his character, and to listen to what he had to say, and then, as a wise man, to judge for himself. Nathanael followed this excellent advice; and the result was all that could be desired. There are many who are kept back from genuine religion by unreasonable prejudices, unfounded suppositions, and accidental circumstances, not at all connected with the substance of the Gospel, or with the real merits of the case. Philip's procedure, on this occasion, furnishes a useful hint of a very likely way to benefit such persons. We are not, indeed, bound up from using full discussions, or from answering their objections at length, or from any means of a scriptural nature; but there is nothing better than to say to them: "Come and see,"—then to invite them candidly to examine the subject, and to form their own opinion after making personal trial of whatever cannot be judged of without actual experience. And in offering any advice of this kind, it is of importance to its success, as it is essential to there being any thing really good in its tender, that we be able honestly to speak as having ourselves known the truth of the things into which we wish them to search, and as being still ready to accompany them in that search; or, in other words, that we say not, Go and see, but, Come and see.

Are there any of you whom any kind of prejudice is preventing from receiving Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and submitting thoroughly to him as your Lord? Philip's advice is now given to you. We do not say: Lay aside the reason of men, assent at once to every thing advanced, and submit without light and without conviction. But we say: Disabuse yourselves of your prejudices, seek to be swayed by truth, and not by prepossessions: do not make up your opinion without sufficient information; the business is well worth your attention; inquire thoroughly into it: hear with your own ears, inspect with your own eyes—"Come and see." Do you doubt of the Messiahship of Jesus, or of his having actually fulfilled all that was implied in that office, for the chief of sinners, and therefore for you? Do you doubt this from any prejudice, or from any imperfection of knowledge? "Come and see." Inquire into the evidence on which the truth rests, and, by the help of the Spirit of Christ, you will be led to say to him, with Nathanael's candour, and conviction, and joy: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Are you prejudiced against a life of real faith and spirituality, under the idea that it is inconsistent with present happiness? "Come and see." You do not act reasonably in condemning a life of which you are conscious that you are

practically ignorant ; make trial of it first ; accept the hope, and submit to the holiness of the Gospel, and then you will be able fairly to judge of its effect on the peace and happiness of man. Do you, from that dislike which is so natural to the human mind, or from some distorted representation which has been given you of the views, feelings, attainments, and habits of those who, in the judgment of charity founded on the Word of God, furnish satisfactory evidence that they are indeed his people and living for eternity—do you labour under a strong prejudice against such persons, as if they were ignorant, and fanciful, and gloomy, and avoid their society as unpleasant, and feel ready to ask with disdain, Can any good thing be found among them? we just say to you, “Come and see.” We do not insist on your allowing their general superiority before you are convinced of it ; but we do say, that, as rational creatures, who have to answer for yourselves, whatever may become of them, you ought to cease to look at them through the jaundiced eye of prejudice ; and that if, after making candid allowance for human infirmity, and distinguishing the casual imperfections and unseemly excrescences from the essential and leading features of their system and life, you find the balance of good sense, virtue, and happiness, preponderating in their favour, then you have also found what is the system which you yourselves should adopt, and what is the life which you yourselves should lead. Proper attention to this invitation would be most useful to us all. We shall not have considered the life of Philip in vain, if we have only learned from it, in regard to the most important inquiry which can engage our thoughts, to follow out the spirit of his advice, “Come and see.”

But let us proceed to notice the few other particulars which are known from Scripture of Philip's history ; and these, as well as the account of his call, are all related by John. Philip is thus introduced in the Gospel by John (vi. 5): “When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to prove him ; for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” In this Philip discovered the weakness of his faith, and the want of due reflection. He intimated that the stock of the apostles, at the time, could ill afford such a sum, if, indeed, it would not be exactly all that their stock contained ; and though he had seen Christ perform many wonders, and especially that at the marriage at Cana in Galilee, it never occurred to him with what ease the Lord, by the exercise of his divine power, could furnish, even for such a multitude, bread in abundance.

We noticed, in the history of Andrew, that certain Greeks, who had come up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, applied to Philip, saying : “Sir, we would see Jesus :”* on which Philip

* John xii. 20.

and Andrew, having consulted together, told Jesus. Philip here discovered, perhaps, some unnecessary caution, but certainly much kindness.

We read in the 14th chapter of John, from the 7th verse, as follows: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Philip here expressed that earnest desire after an acquaintance with God, which, as to the substance of it, was commendable. But, whatever may have been the precise idea he had in view, and whether or not he wished some such visible display of the divine glory as was given to Moses, he was wishing some other discovery of God than what Christ had given: here, then, was Philip's imperfection. We ought to desire the knowledge of the true God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our reconciled God and Father through him. And whatever may have been the imperfection of Philip's views, it is a blessed truth that such a discovery sufficeth for the happiness of all who obtain it. The sight of God in heaven is perfect satisfaction and happiness. "As for me," says the Psalmist, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." And the believing sight of God as a Father, on earth, also, brings a high measure of satisfaction along with it. That sight let us all earnestly desire. But let us not mistake as to the way in which it is to be obtained. Perhaps we feel at times as if our minds were lost in the mystery of an invisible God and an invisible eternity; and we are tempted to wish for some impression of these objects to be made on our senses, in the idea that thus our faith would be confirmed and our mind satisfied. But no such corporeal manifestations are to be expected; and none are needful. Philip and the other disciples, in seeing the Son, had seen the Father: and this is the only way in which we can see the Father, or have any need to see him on earth. In this respect, these disciples had hardly any advantage over us. It was not in the sight of Christ's body that they could see the Father; but it was in the whole manifestation of the Son's mediatorial person and character. Now, we have that person and character strikingly described in his Word. There let us study it. There we may behold, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord. There we may see, in Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; there we may see all God's attributes illustrated in perfect harmony; there we may behold his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And a realizing view of the Father, as reconciled to us and delighting over us to do us good, will bring that rest to ourselves now, which is the fore-

taste and the pledge of perfect satisfaction for ever. May he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!

Philip is nowhere mentioned in the Book of the Acts, except in the catalogue of the apostles in the 1st chapter: for you will, of course, carefully distinguish between Philip the apostle, and Philip the deacon. Ancient history represents the apostle Philip as labouring successfully in Upper Asia. He is said to have come at last to Hieropolis, a city in Phrygia; where the magistrates were so enraged at his success, that they first imprisoned him, then scourged him, and then caused him to be put to death, some say by crucifixion, and others by being hung up against a pillar. Upon the whole, then, his history furnishes us with another evidence of the truth of revelation, another trophy of divine grace, and another most powerful and encouraging call to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life.

LECTURE XXVII.

LUKE VI. 14-16.

“Bartholomew, 15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”

IN proceeding with a sketch of the history of the twelve apostles, we considered, in the last lecture, the history of James the Greater, of John his brother, and of Philip. We now come to “*Bartholomew*.”

We find the name Bartholomew only four times in Scripture, namely, in the lists of the apostles contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There is no complete list of the apostles given by John, nor indeed does the name Bartholomew occur in any part of his Gospel. Though we cannot be certain of it, it is not an improbable supposition of some, that Bartholomew was the person otherwise called Nathanael. The reasons on which this supposition has been founded are chiefly two—first, that as Philip and Bartholomew are mentioned together in the catalogues in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so we find Philip and Nathanael mentioned together at a very early period in the 1st chapter of John, Philip, as we had occasion to notice in his life, introducing Nathanael to Christ; and secondly, that while John nowhere speaks of any one by the name of Bartholomew, he speaks, in his last chapter, of Nathanael being along with several of the apostles at the Sea of Tiberias. Nathanael, it is supposed, was called Bartholomew, or Bar-tolmai, that is, the son of Tolmai, as Simon Peter was called Bar-jona, that is, the son of Jonas. If this supposition be correct, then Bartholomew was the man on whom our Lord pronounced this high praise, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”*—the man who, convinced by the testimony of Philip, and the evidence of our Lord’s omniscience in seeing him when he was under the fig tree, and taught also by the grace of God, exclaimed, with believing admiration: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel;” and who was to see still greater things than these, even all the miraculous circumstances and heavenly intercourse of the Saviour’s history, or, “the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.” In this way, he would furnish us with a beautiful ex-

* John i. 47.

ample of simplicity and godly sincerity, and an encouragement to hope that, if we receive and confess Christ as our Saviour and King, he will vouchsafe us still clearer discoveries of his glory, and still richer communications of his grace.

If these particulars do not relate to Bartholomew, we have no scriptural references to him at all, beyond the mere mention of his name. The early Christian historians* agree, however, in stating that he travelled as far as to India, that is, Hither India, or the parts near Asia Proper, preaching the gospel. It is said that the Gospel of Matthew was left by Bartholomew in India, and found by a zealous Christian† who travelled into that country long after, with the same view of disseminating the gospel. From India, Bartholomew is said to have returned into the more northern and western parts of Asia. At last, when preaching in Albania, he is said to have received the crown of martyrdom, by being first flayed alive, and then crucified.

We come next to "*Matthew*." Having lately considered the few particulars of his history recorded in Scripture, when expounding the account given of his call in the preceding chapter, it will be enough here to notice them in the shortest way we can. He also bore the name of Levi. He was the son of Alphaeus. Before his call, he followed the business of a tax-gatherer. In much humility, he calls himself "*Matthew the publican*." Jesus, passing by, saw him sitting at the receipt of custom, and said to him, "*Follow me*:" and he immediately left his lucrative office and followed him. After this, "*he made Christ and his disciples a great feast in his house*." In all this we have an example of the power of divine grace, of ready submission to the gospel call, of superiority to the world, and of love and attention to Christ and his people. Very soon after his call to follow Christ as a disciple, Matthew was called to the office of the apostleship. We have no further account of his life in Scripture. There is little which can from any source be affirmed with any confidence of his history after the bare fact stated, in the 1st chapter of the Acts, of his being in Jerusalem with the other apostles; so irrecoverably is the truth of his history lost in fable, and in contradictory traditions. The outline of the most commonly received opinion is, that he lived a few, perhaps eight years, in Judea, after the death of Christ; that he then laboured in Ethiopia; and that he at last suffered martyrdom. There is no doubt whatever of his having been a faithful and devoted servant of the Redeemer.

Matthew is allowed to have written his Gospel before he left Judea. Of course, it was written very soon after the things it related took place. Many of the ancients say that he wrote his Gospel in Hebrew: modern critics, however, generally incline to the opinion that, like the rest of the New Testament, it was first written in Greek, though there appears to have been a Hebrew, or perhaps Syriac version of it, for the more particu-

* Eusebius, Socrates.

† Pantænus, according to Eusebius.

lar use of the Jews. Perhaps Matthew himself may have given it both in Greek and Hebrew, almost at the same time. Matthew enters very particularly into the circumstances of our Saviour's life. His way of writing is remarkable for simplicity and gravity; and his work contains, under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, an invaluable account of the history of redemption by the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death of the only begotten Son of God, our once crucified, but now exalted Lord. Thanks be to God for so precious a composition! It has pleased infinite wisdom that little should be known of the personal biography of its inspired penman; but in beautiful and becoming subserviency to the glory of Him of whom he writes, the name of the humble publican sounds pleasant in our ears. Many of us are perhaps more familiar with his pages than with those of any other writer: as they were the first written, so they stand at the head of the New Testament works: and as a very important part of that blessed whole, the Book of Divine Inspiration, they will continue increasingly to illuminate, and impress, and reform, and bless mankind, henceforth, and onward, to the time when an assembled world shall actually behold the grand judgment scene which he was honoured to portray from the description of his Lord and Master—even "when the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels with him."

The next apostle here mentioned is "*Thomas*." He was called, in Greek, *Didymus*, which signifies a twin, as does also the Hebrew word Thomas. There is something very interesting in twin brothers. Together born, and, when they live, generally together bred, formed to similiar habits of mind, clothed in the same manner, and so similar in bodily appearance as to be often mistaken for each other, they can hardly be beheld with indifference. What man does not expect that they should be attached to each other by the very tenderest, and yet strongest of natural affection's ties? and what Christian does not earnestly desire, as he looks on them, that they may be twin brothers, or at least brothers, in Christ; so that whatever may be their lot in this life, they may be happy together in heaven, no more to be separated for ever? If there be any twins, of either sex now present, let them think how they could bear an eternal separation: and if the very idea of such a thing be too painful for them, let that feeling operate as one of many reasons why, like the twin whose history we are considering, they should become the hearty and faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; for thus, instead of being separated, or, which would be still worse, both consigned to misery, at the great day, they shall be caught up together with all the saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. Instead, however, of being both spared together, it often happens that one of the twins is removed in infancy, or early life, and the other left to struggle on alone. Very likely this had been the

case with Thomas, as otherwise there would probably have been some mention of his twin brother.

We have no account of the birth or early history of Thomas—no mention of him at all till we find his name in the apostolic list. Nor have we any particulars of his history, till near the end of our Saviour's ministry; and for all these particulars we are, under God, indebted to the evangelist John. Following his order of relating them, we first find Thomas called Didymus, thus expressing himself to his fellow-disciples, when Christ declared his resolution, on the death of Lazarus, to go to Bethany: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." * This was probably, not a burst of affection for Lazarus, but a declaration of the extreme danger to which Jesus was exposing himself by going back into Judea, and to the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and a proposal to the apostles to share his perils, and even to die with him, if duty called. There seem to have been some ignorance of Christ's power, and something of the rashness of self-confidence, in this language: but it was surely the language of some faith, and of much ardent affection.

The next mention of Thomas is in John xiv. 5; where, after our Lord had said: "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know, Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Thomas, like the other disciples, was probably still dreaming of Christ's establishing a temporal kingdom, and thinking to what place on earth he might go to set it up: and yet, whatever mist might envelop their minds, they had a general idea of his character as a Saviour from sin. To clear away all doubt, however, Jesus addressed to Thomas these most edifying words: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Let us profit, my brethren, by these words, which, though originally spoken to Didymus, are also written for our learning, on whom the ends of the world are come. Let us remember that there is no name given under heaven whereby we may be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus; let us forsake every false confidence, and every devious path; and let us seek to go to God and to heaven, by the true and living way.

There remains that most remarkable passage in Thomas' history related in the 20th chapter of John, from the 24th verse. Having mentioned our Lord's appearing to the apostles after his resurrection, John goes on to say: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples, therefore, said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And, after eight days again, his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he unto

* John xi. 16.

Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." We may here remark the following things, most interesting in relation to Thomas, and most edifying to us. Thomas here discovered sinful incredulity, and made most unreasonable demands as to what would satisfy his mind. Jesus, however, while he gently rebuked him, showed him wonderful condescension, and complied literally with his demand. Thomas then felt his judgment convinced and his heart overcome, and uttered his believing and affectionate exclamation, which Jesus followed up with what is to us a most encouraging declaration of the blessedness of those who have not seen, and yet have believed. And why, my friends, should not this blessedness be ours? We have not seen, nor can we ever see, the Lord Jesus on earth; but that is not necessary to a saving acquaintance with him, or to faith in him. We have the most satisfactory evidences whereon to rest our faith, and of these Thomas' incredulity and subsequent conviction form one of the most striking: on these let us meditate, remembering, at the same time, that saving faith is the gift of God by his Spirit, who is promised to those who ask him. Let us, however, clearly understand that it is not the belief merely of the divine mission of Christ, or of any of the miracles connected with his history, such as that of his resurrection, which can save our souls, but the belief that he really is, and really has done, what the revelation given by him, and thus attested, declares him to be, and to have done. You observe, the exclamation of Thomas expresses much more than his belief of Christ's resurrection. That must have been believed by any of his enemies who, having known him before his death, might have seen him after his resurrection, and might still have continued his enemies, it having been long manifest that no miracle was, of itself, sufficient to effect the conversion of a sinner. Thomas expressed his persuasion, not merely of Christ's resurrection, but of the glory of Christ's whole character and work, and of his own personal interest in him. So must we, in this extensive exercise of faith, embrace the whole work of a risen Saviour, and feel ready, when we think of him, each of us to exclaim: "My Lord, and my God!" Thus shall we indeed be blessed in him, "whom having not seen we love; and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Thomas is merely mentioned, in the last chapter of John, as being with certain other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and in the 1st chapter of the Acts, as being with the rest of the apostles in Jerusalem. His name does not occur again in Scripture. Uninspired writers say that he travelled into many distant lands; that he preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes,

Persians, and others; and that, after labouring with considerable success in India, he at last suffered martyrdom.

We come now to "*James the son of Alphaeus*." In order to distinguish him from the other apostle of the same name, he is now generally called James the Less, or the Younger. He is called "the Lord's brother," as in Matt. xiii. 55: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" and in Gal. i. 19, Paul says: "Other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." Some say that this James was Christ's brother, as being the son of Joseph by a former wife: but it is the general opinion that he was, strictly speaking, only Christ's cousin; it being common with the Jews to call those brethren who were nearly related to each other, though not the children of the same parent, or parents. We have no particulars of this apostle's history, till after the resurrection of Christ. He is understood to be the individual meant by Paul in the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, when writing of the appearances of Christ after his resurrection: "After that he was seen of James." He was plainly much distinguished among the apostles. When Peter was delivered from prison, as we read in the 12th chapter of the Acts, he said: "Go, show these things unto James, and to the brethren."* In the famous council of the apostles and elders, held in Jerusalem, on the subject of the incumbency of the ceremonies of the law of Moses on Christians, and especially converts from heathenism, as described in the 15th chapter of the Acts, after Peter, Barnabas, and Paul had spoken, it was James who, after various apposite observations, proposed the motion which was unanimously adopted and acted on by the council: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them who from among the Gentiles are turned unto God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood." In the 21st chapter of the Acts, at the 18th verse, we find these words: "And the day following," or the day after their arrival at Jerusalem, "Paul went in with us," that is, with Luke and others, "unto James; and all the elders were present." This passage is in favour of the opinion that James continued to reside at Jerusalem, and of course, to have, as an apostle, the chief lead in the church there, while the other apostles were labouring in different parts of the world.

Ancient historians agree that James the Younger continued at Jerusalem till his death. He was so exemplary in his conduct, that he acquired the surname of the Just. His piety, however, and especially his success in propagating and encouraging Christianity, drew on him the jealousy and rage of the Jewish rulers. The following account is given of his end, and generally believed to be substantially correct.† Ananias, the high priest,

* James, the brother of John, by this time was slain with the sword.

† From Eusebius, Josephus, &c.

procured a sentence of condemnation from the council against him and some other Christians. But pretending to flatter him, as capable of putting the people right on the subject of the new religion, the scribes and Pharisees had him placed on a pinnacle, or part of the flat roof, of the temple, at the feast of the passover, and called on him to address the multitude who were assembled in the court below. On this, James said with a loud voice: "Why do you inquire of Jesus the Son of man? He sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven." The people below hearing this, some of them began to cry out: "Hosanna to the Son of David." This so enraged those of James' enemies who were standing beside him, that they cast him down headlong. Though dreadfully mangled, he was able to get upon his knees to pray for his murderers. While he was in that attitude, those of his enemies who were below began to throw showers of stones at him; till at last, one man more determined than the rest, beat out the apostle's brains with a fuller's club. Thus nobly died, at a very advanced age, another apostolic martyr; and of him even Josephus declares that his murder was a great national crime.

James the Less wrote one inspired Epistle. It is called a General Epistle, as it is addressed, not to any particular Church, but to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, or to the believing Jews of the dispersion. He exhorts them to patience under persecution and other sufferings; he exposes the Antinomian abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, showing that the faith which justifies always produces good works; he brings forward a variety of searching views, and he gives many excellent practical exhortations.

The tenth in this catalogue, is "*Simon called Zelotes.*" Simon, or Simeon, was a very common name with the Jews; therefore, this apostle was usually distinguished by the surname of Zelotes, or the Zealous. Some suppose that he was so called because of his having belonged to a sect mentioned by Josephus, called Zelotes or Zealots; but most are inclined to the idea, more honourable to Simon, of his having been thus distinguished because of his great zeal in embracing and supporting the Gospel. In the lists of Matthew and Mark, you will find this apostle called "Simon the Canaanite." Some suppose that this signifies, that he was of the town of Cana in Galilee. But others, remarking that Cana is the Hebrew for zeal, understand the word Canaanite to be of the same signification as Zelotes in Greek, namely, Zealous. This apostle is known from Scripture only by name. As to the traditionary accounts of his history after the dispersion of the apostles, it is said that he laboured in Egypt and Africa, and even in Britain; but the accounts are too much at variance with each other to allow us to depend fully on them, any farther than to say that he preached in various countries, and at last suffered martyrdom. It has not been given, even to all the faithful apostles, to hold a very conspicuous place

in the Sacred Records, or in the authenticated history of the Church: no wonder, then, that it should be the lot of many a sincere, and even very exemplary and useful believer, to pass through life in obscurity, and soon to be entirely forgotten on earth. All the righteous, however, shall be brought forth to the light, and shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. As for Simon the Canaanite, or the Zealous, though his services are not recorded in Scripture, we may be sure they are recorded in heaven, and that he will appear as one of the assessors who shall occupy the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The eleventh in this celebrated list is, "*Judas, the brother of James.*" Judah, Judas, and Jude, are but one name, and from the time of Jacob's son, it was a common name among the Jews. As there were two of the apostles of the name of James, so there were two of the name of Judas. This Judas is now most commonly called by us Jude. He was, we are told, the brother of James—that is, plainly of James the Less; probably his brother strictly so called; and of course he was the brother of our Lord, in the same sense, probably, of near relation, or cousin, as James, according to the words formerly quoted concerning Christ's connections: "Are not his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?" In the list of the apostles, in the 1st chapter of the Acts, this apostle is designated exactly as here, "Judas the brother of James;" but when we examine the lists in the 10th chapter of Matthew, and the 3d chapter of Mark, we only find one Judas mentioned. In place of this name Judas, however, we find in Matthew, "Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;" and in Mark, simply "Thaddeus." It is quite obvious, that by these names Matthew and Mark mean the same individual; and as there is no name agreeing with these in this list of Luke, and no mention in the other two lists of any one by the name of Judas the brother of James, it follows, of necessity, from there being but twelve apostles, that all these three are designations of the same individual. Nor is this more extraordinary, than that another apostle should have been called Simon, and Peter, and Cephas, and Bar-jona. Lebbeus, from the Hebrew, signifies hearty, or a man of heart; and Thaddeus, from the same language, signifies the Confessor, or Praiser, or one who confesses or praises. The only circumstance mentioned of him in Scripture, is that in John xiv. 22: "Judas saith unto Jesus (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In the midst of much remaining ignorance, chiefly occasioned, probably, by temporal ideas of Christ's kingdom, Jude, in a way worthy of imitation, applies to him for instruction, and obtains a most encouraging and gracious reply. Let us seek information from the written Word of Christ, with prayer; and let us study

to love and obey him: then shall we be an habitation of God through the Spirit; and the presence of the Lord will be with us, causing us to experience his love, stirring us up to the exercise of every holy affection, and giving us a foretaste of heaven.

Some writers say that Jude, after labouring in different parts of the world, died a martyr in Persia. He has left one short epistle, which is superscribed, "Jude the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James;" and which is addressed to all who "are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Its leading design is to warn them against false teachers, who had already crept in (such probably as those who were afterwards called Nicolaitanes, Simonians, and Gnostics), and who both introduced heretical and licentious doctrines, and disturbed the peace of the Church.

So much for these eleven faithful followers of the Lamb, who all received him and obeyed him as their own Saviour, who all did and suffered much for his sake, and who, with one exception, all sealed their testimony with their blood. They were, it is true, subject to many imperfections of character, so that we ought to follow their example only in so far as they followed Christ. But after the Spirit was poured on them from on high, they were perfectly qualified as teachers; so that we are to consider ourselves as "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." After that period, too, they became most eminent examples of Christian faith, holiness, meekness, zeal, and fortitude. There is something very animating, and yet very affecting, in their whole history, and especially in the way in which it almost always closed. "I think," said one who was afterwards miraculously called to the apostleship, "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."

Now, however, in the close of this sketch, a character of a very different complexion presents itself to our view; for here we behold, not the imperfections of the believer, not the backslidings of the saint, not the temporary unkindness of a friend, not the blemishes of a beautiful face, but the prevalence of unbelief, the depravity of the sinner, the cruelty of the monster, the detection of the hypocrite, the perfidy of the traitor, the glaring portraiture of perhaps the worst of men, unredeemed by one pleasing feature, or one ray of hope. Let us take a view of it, and think of the lesson which it reads to us.

"*Judas Iscariot, who also was the traitor.*" Of the various derivations of this surname Iscariot, the most probable seems to be that which views it as descriptive of the place of his birth, or residence; Ish-carioth signifying in Hebrew, a man of Carioth: and Carioth was a small town beyond Jordan. The following are the chief circumstances of his history. He is first mentioned at this time, when chosen to the apostleship. He professed himself a disciple before, though he was not a genuine convert.

He was sent out, some time after, along with the other eleven, to preach, and to work miracles. After Peter's famous declaration, Jesus said,* "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" or an accuser. "He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." He is next mentioned,† as thus finding fault with Mary, for anointing our Lord's feet: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." In the 13th chapter of John, we have these particulars. "The devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Christ." Jesus, after washing his disciples' feet, said to them: "Ye are clean, but not all: for he knew who should betray him." After this he said to his disciples: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me:" and he at last plainly pointed out the individual by giving a sop, or morsel of meat, when he had dipped it in the sauce, to Judas Iscariot. "He then, having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night." Before this time, however, influenced by resentment and covetousness, Judas had covenanted with the chief priests and captains, to deliver up Christ, for thirty pieces of silver. He, therefore, had been seeking, for some time, an opportunity to betray him. That opportunity seemed now to have arrived. After the passover supper, and the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus had gone out with his disciples to a garden at the foot of the mount of Olives. Obtaining, therefore, the assistance of a band of men and officers, Judas went out to the place where he was, with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. You remember the sign Judas gave, and our Lord's words: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Jesus being apprehended, and condemned to be crucified, Judas repented of what he had done, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself;" and "falling down he burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out." The potter's field was bought with the price of his treachery—the price of blood. Such is a very hasty outline of his iniquitous life, and tragical end.

But it is natural to ask, Why was there a traitor among the twelve? and what good purpose was served by this development of iniquity, which He who rules over all was thus pleased to permit? Now, here was fulfilled, in the most striking way, the declaration that the wrath of men shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he shall restrain. Among the uses of this awful history, we shall notice three, in conclusion.

First. *The history of Judas Iscariot furnishes a striking proof of the truth of Christianity.* It is a proof of this, as it is a fulfilment

* John vi. 70.

† John xii. 5.

of prophecy. It is a fulfilment of passages in the 69th and 109th Psalms, as shown by Peter in the 1st chapter of the Acts, from the 16th verse: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus, For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of our ministry." For it is written in the Book of Psalms: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take." It is a fulfilment, too, of the prophecy in Zech. xi. 12: "And I said unto them, If ye think it good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them! And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."*

This history is also a proof of the truth of Christianity, inasmuch as it brings forward the testimony of an enemy, and a perfectly well-informed enemy, in its support. It cannot be said by Infidels that, if among all those whom Jesus gathered around him, there had been one who was fully acquainted with his character, aware of the imposture which was practising, and determined to make it known, the whole would have been exposed. On the contrary, here was a man admitted to the most intimate familiarity with Jesus and the rest of his apostles, who was strongly inclined to expose them, if it had been in his power. But he had nothing whereof to accuse them. Nay, when enmity and avarice had urged him on to betray the Lord Jesus, instead of discovering any thing to justify the step he had taken, or of feeling satisfied with what he had done, he bore testimony to Christ's innocence, and, of course, to the truth of all that Christ said; and he repented of the crime of betraying such a character, and laid violent hands on himself. Can any thing be conceived more conclusive?

Secondly. *This history teaches us that the occasional occurrence of grievous offences among professors of religion, should not prejudice us against religion itself.* If even among the apostles such a case occurred, it need not greatly surprise us that something similar should take place in the Church, from time to time. Doubtless we ought to be much grieved by such things: and doubtless the guilt of scandalous professors, and apostates, and traitors, is very great: yet they are to be looked for; they must not discourage us, nor must we thereby be so stumbled as to suppose that there is no sincerity of religious profession at all, or to forsake the good way ourselves. Let us remember the warning of our Lord: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh: it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea."

Lastly. *The history of Judas furnishes a most awful warning to all*

* So also Ps. xli. 9, and John xiii. 18. "Mine own familiar friend," &c.

who profess to be the disciples of Christ, to beware lest they fall in a similar way. As there was one traitor among the twelve, so, there is reason to apprehend, there may be many a traitor among us. When we think of this, it becomes each of us to say, with godly jealousy, "Lord is it I?" Not to insist on the various sinful minor traits of his character, which we ought to consider as so many beacons warning us to keep far off from danger, let us especially beware of acting the part of traitors to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah! my friends, was Judas the only man who ever betrayed the Saviour? Well would it have been had this been the case. But all may be said to be traitors against him, who, having pretended to be his disciples, prove themselves to be his enemies, who cast off regard to his authority and glory, and who speak or act so as to betray his cause in the world. Let us mark well the consequences of such hypocrisy and treachery. If we die traitors to the Son of Man, whatever be the circumstances of our removal, it would have been far better for us that we had never been born. May that innocent blood which lay so heavy on the conscience of Judas as to sink him in horrid death and misery, calm our hearts in nature's final conflict. Professing to receive, may we indeed receive, the Lord Jesus Christ; may we also walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving: and may the Lord enable us to be faithful unto death, that we may receive of him a crown of life.

LECTURE XXVIII.

LUKE VI. 17-26.

“ And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. 20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. 22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. 23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

IN the Lectures on the five preceding verses, we considered the account given of our Lord's appointing twelve of his disciples to the office of the apostleship. After spending the night in prayer on a mountain (a fit preparation for so important a work), when it was day, he called unto him his disciples, and of them he chose twelve, whom he was to send forth to preach and to work miracles, and whom he called apostles. From the names of the whole of them being mentioned, we took occasion to give a short sketch of their history. After thus solemnly choosing them, and having also probably given them such instructions as were necessary to enable them to understand the nature, and to enter into the duties of the office, “ *he came down with them,*” from the mountain, “ *and stood in the plain,*” that he might show himself ready to receive all who came to him. What diligence and zeal did he display in discharging the work given him to do! After a night of watching, he prepares for a day of labour.

The morning, as it is to be inferred from the train of the history, being now well advanced, a great crowd began to assemble around him, consisting of “ *the company of his disciples,*” who usually attended on his ministry, and also “ *a great multitude of people out of all Judea, and*” especially out of the city of “ *Jerusalem;*” and even from “ *the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon,*” on the Mediterranean, where, though religious advantages were few, there were still, it seems, a goodly number of people who had a desire to be instructed in the way of life. They “ *came to hear*” Jesus—to listen to his preaching; most of them from a consider-

able, and many of them from a very great distance. This is a rebuke to those who are negligent of public ordinances when the house of God is near them, perhaps within a short walk of their own houses. This, too, is an encouraging example to those who would spare no pains, or labour, to enjoy these ordinances. It is surely well worth while to go a great way to hear the word; and those who have not the preaching of the gospel near them, "had better travel far for it than be without it."*

They came also "*to be healed of their diseases*;" that is, many of them came for that reason. Many of them were afflicted with common bodily diseases; and some of them were "*vexed with unclean spirits*," or laboured under demoniacal possessions: and without particularizing their cures, or dwelling on the circumstances of them, the evangelist merely says that "*they were healed*." In so simple and unpretending a way does he record the fact of the performance of so many wonders.

They "*sought to touch him*." Of the various ways in which the diseased were cured by Christ, one of the most remarkable was that here mentioned. We read of an individual case of it, in the woman with the bloody issue, who touched him, as he was on the way to raise the ruler's daughter.† "And, behold, a woman, who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch of his garment, I shall be whole. And immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue," that is, healing efficacy, "is gone out of me." He, however, said to the woman: "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." We read, too, of Christ curing great numbers at a time in this way: thus, at the end of the 14th chapter of Matthew: "When they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And, when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." In like manner, we are told here, that the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue, or power, "out of him, and healed them all." The whole multitude, that is, all who had need of healing: and some think that even those who were not labouring under any particular disease touched him also, thereby finding a confirmation of their bodily health and vigour.

And what a delightful representation does this give of the work of the Saviour, even in a temporal view! We here behold him scattering blessings everywhere around him. The deaf ear is opened, the dark eye is illuminated, the feeble feet are strengthened, the withered hand is restored, the pale, and wasting, and agonized are raised up, and relieved, and invigor-

* Henry.

† Matt. ix. 20; Luke viii. 43.

ated; every form of bodily wretchedness gives way, and the possessed of Satan are composed, and brought to sit at the feet of Jesus in their right mind. But what an additional interest do these miracles on men's bodies acquire, when we view them as demonstrative of our Lord's power and willingness to cure all our spiritual maladies, and even emblematical of that spiritual work! Let us, then, dwell a little on the passage in this view—the view in which it is particularly calculated to edify and impress us.

Is there not a strong resemblance between the bodily diseases which Christ cured, and those maladies which affect men's souls. Are not men naturally blind? Though they may think that they see and are very wise, yet are they dark and ignorant, and their eyes must be opened, before they can turn from the power of Satan unto God. Are they not deaf to the calls of God, having ears but hear not? Does not the language of the leper become them—Unclean, unclean? Are they not without strength, and ungodly? Are they not even led captive by Satan, and instigated to much evil by his suggestions?

As there is a resemblance in the diseases, so is there not also a resemblance in the cure? The blessings of salvation are often represented by figures drawn from such cases: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." In applying for these bodily cures, did not the people come sensible of their diseased state, and anxious to be delivered from it? Did they not come earnestly imploring help? Did they not come in humility, some of them at times falling down at Christ's feet? And did they not come in faith—believing, always in his ability, and generally in his willingness, to make them whole? And thus it is that those whom he heals spiritually, apply to him. They come convinced of sin; they come humbly, renouncing all trust in themselves; and they come in and by faith, believing in him, and receiving him as freely offered to them, and submitting themselves to his healing power. And whatever was the variety of the circumstances of these bodily cures, do they not find a parallel in the spiritual? Here, too, Jesus heals sometimes secretly, and sometimes openly; sometimes very quickly, and sometimes gradually; sometimes by means that are obvious, and sometimes by means that escape observation and recollection. As to this particular way of obtaining a cure by touching him, it is very expressive of the exercise of faith bringing the soul into spiritual contact with him—a connection which, though it may seem to the superficial observer to be too slight, is yet perfectly effectual; for, no man ever yet put forth the hand of faith to touch Christ, no man ever thus touched, though it were but the hem of his garment, no man ever thus applied to him and believed in him at all, without finding virtue going out of Christ to heal him.

Is there not, then, my friends, at this moment, a close resemblance between your situation and that of the multitude who thronged round Christ on the plain?—for, do you not, like them, profess to have come to hear him, and to be healed of your diseases? You have done well to resort to the place where he is to be found—found, though not visibly, yet really, in the ordinances of his house, and in the power of his word. See, then, that you be as anxious for spiritual, as that multitude were for bodily healing. Think well of the nature of your disease. Endeavour to feel impressed, not only with its existence and general danger, but also with its worst features, and particular symptoms. Rest not contented with remaining at a distance from Christ, however small that distance may appear to you; but be aware of the necessity of getting quite near to him, of actually touching him. He is now present, ready to heal you. Let no consideration prevent you from applying to him for relief, immediate relief. Do not think of having recourse to other physicians, or other means. Do not think of waiting till you are better, for you are daily getting worse. Do not lose time by first seeking to be more worthy of him, or by speculating about his power, or doubting of his willingness to cure you; but apply to him just as you are, approach to him sick and sinful as you are, touch him pained and diseased and wasting away as you are; and virtue will go out of him to heal you. To brood obstinately and indolently over your misery, after you have discovered it, and to give way to unbelief or doubting, will do you no good, but much harm; whereas, if you touch but the hem of the Saviour's garment, believing in his name, you shall be made perfectly whole. How wonderful was his kindness to that multitude of diseased, and unclean and wretched people! He did not spurn them from his presence, or order them to keep at a distance as offensive to him, or prohibit them from touching him, lest he should be defiled by them; but he stood waiting for them, he encouraged them to approach, he permitted them to touch him; and every one of them who did touch him was healed. What encouragement, then, is there here for you! He will not disdain you, he will not repulse you, he will not refuse you; nay, he courts your approach, he waits for you to touch him. However desperate your case may appear to be, touch him, and you will find immediate relief. However aggravated your sins may be, believe in him, and they will all be forgiven and subdued. And whether there be any correctness or not in the idea entertained by some, that literally this whole multitude, even those who could not be called invalids, sought to touch Christ, and were benefited by doing so, we may at least say that all of you without exception have need, and are here encouraged, to apply to him. Those of you who have already experienced his healing power, should touch him again, that your recovery may be carried on, and your strength increased. You should apply to him again and again, till your

cure be completed. Live near to him. Continue united to him. Habitually depend on him. What a blessed thing would it be, did the whole multitude of us at this moment really draw near to Christ, so to hear him, that we may be healed by him—did we indeed anew, or for the first time, come quite near to him, and put forth the hand of faith and touch him! Great, beyond doubt, were the happiness and exaltation which pervaded the multitude on the plain, when anguish, and paleness, and disease, and approaching death, were suddenly succeeded by ease, and smiles, and blooming health, and vigorous life; but greater still, and far more important and more permanent, would be the happiness and exultation pervading this assembly. Nor, except in the refusal of our own unbelieving hearts, is there a single bar in the way of our obtaining such blessedness. May God, by his almighty Spirit, break away that bar utterly from before us, that we may, with one determination, press forward to the Saviour, and touch him, and be made whole!

Before entering on the exposition of the discourse which Luke sets down as having been delivered by our Lord at this time, a preliminary question presents itself, namely, whether this be an account, though a shorter account, of the same sermon which is contained at greater length in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew. Some, remarking the close resemblance between these two parts of Scripture, especially at the beginning and at the end, and considering it improbable that our Lord would twice go over the same ground, look on what we have here as an abridgment of the sermon on the mount. There are reasons, however, which, with many, preponderate in favour of an opposite opinion. For example, the resemblance, though close, is not so close as may at first sight appear. Luke omits the greater part of the sermon in Matthew entirely, which he could hardly be supposed to have done on the other supposition; and even in much of what appears similar, the differences are important; as in the beatitudes, Matthew setting down eight beatitudes, and Luke only four, not one of which four is given in exactly the same words with what appears to correspond in the other evangelist. Nor is it at all unlikely that our Lord may have repeated many of the same ideas after a considerable interval of time, in a different place, and to an audience in a great measure different from the former. Nay, though all other circumstances had been the same, the repetition of the same truths might have been very salutary. It were easy to show, from the same evangelist, that, though not in any case to the same extent as here, yet our Lord did, on several occasions, repeat the same truths. Paul said to the Philippians: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." It is to be remarked, too, that we find here four woes, to which there is no reference in Matthew. It is thought, also, that the time of the two sermons must have been different; in proof of which the strongest circumstance is that, according to Matthew's

Gospel, * the calling of Matthew took place a considerable time after the sermon on the mount, and according to Luke's account, † before the sermon here set down. And, finally, what appears to have much weight, is the consideration of the difference of place. The sermon recorded by Matthew was preached on a mountain, it being expressly introduced with the words: Christ "went up into a mountain," and followed by the words: "When he was come down from the mountain." But in this chapter of Luke, we are told that Christ had been up in the mountain during the night, and that, when it was day, he chose the twelve apostles, and then "he came down and stood in the plain;" after which is introduced the account of the sermon, the opening sentences of which we have now read. Hence, while the other sermon is generally called the sermon on the mount, this is frequently called the sermon in the plain. After all, the question is not of very great importance. If, indeed, it were positively ascertained that these were two accounts of the same sermon, then they must be held as fixing the sense of each other in a very close way. But, on the supposition of the sermons being different, we are not precluded from applying to them the general rule of comparing spiritual things with spiritual; on the contrary, where the resemblance is more than usually close, the illustrations may be expected to be more than usually important.

A great multitude of his regular and also of his occasional hearers being now assembled, our Lord "*lifted up his eyes on his disciples;*" that is, he gave them a comprehensive and expressive look, in order to draw their attention to what he was to say. So, in order to gain marked attention at another time, when he was to explain who were his mother, and sisters and brethren, or his dearest and best friends, he both "stretched forth his hand" towards his disciples, and "looked round about on them." ‡ Jesus having lifted up his eyes on this multitude, we may believe that their eyes were intently fixed on him in return, and that they waited with anxiety to catch the gracious words which were to proceed out of his mouth.

He began his sermon with four blessings, and four woes; which, as they correspond to each other, may be more concisely and more satisfactorily considered together; that is, each blessing along with its corresponding woe. There is a blessing to the poor, and a woe to the rich; a blessing to the hungry, and a woe to the full; a blessing to them that weep now, and a woe to them that laugh; a blessing to them that are hated and reproached for the Son of man's sake, and a woe to them of whom all men speak well.

First, "*Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.*" § If this beatitude be fixed in its meaning by that which nearly corresponds to it in the sermon on the mount, by the poor we

* Matt. ix. 9.

† Luke v. 27.

‡ Matt. xii. 49; Mark iii. 34.

§ Luke vi. 20, 24.

are here to understand, "the poor in spirit:" and then we have the important instruction that the humble and contrite are happy in the possession of all the blessings of God's kingdom of grace here, and will be far more happy still in his kingdom of glory hereafter; and we are thus taught to renounce all trust in ourselves, and to humble ourselves completely under the mighty hand of God, that he may lift us up. Taking, however, the word as it stands here, and independently on what is recorded in Matthew, by the poor it is more natural to understand those who are literally poor. It is not, however, the literally poor, or the literally rich, independently on their religious state and character, that we are to consider as here either blessed or adjudged to woe. There are many poor people who are altogether unbelieving and worthless; and there are some rich people who are truly pious. It is to be observed that our Lord is speaking to "his disciples" when he says: "Blessed are ye poor," and so on; hence, those of the poor only are to be considered blessed, who are at the same time his disciples. There is still another way of bringing out nearly the same meaning, and that is, by viewing the clause, "for the Son of man's sake, which is expressly subjoined to the last blessing, as intended to be understood to be applied to the foregoing three. Blessed are ye of my disciples, who are poor for the Son of man's sake.

Let not any take this blessing to themselves merely because they are poor. Alas! that any should deceive themselves in this way. How miserable the situation of those who are both poor for time and poor for eternity! But there is here the strongest consolation for the believing and pious poor. What though they are in want of the world's wealth? they are thereby free from many dangerous temptations, while they are possessed of unsearchable riches, and are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Their Lord knows their poverty, but they are rich: though having nothing, they yet possess all things. Experience shows that many poor persons are the objects of God's special love. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

On the other hand, our Lord denounces a woe on the rich. The rich, as contrasted with the poor in spirit, may be the self-righteous and proud; those who, in reference to divine things, think they are "rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." The word rather seems, however, to point to the literally rich: not indeed to the rich without exception, but to the rich who, not being the real disciples of Christ, have no share in the blessings of his salvation, but, on the contrary, lie under the curse. We are reminded, too, of the melancholy fact that not many wealthy men are called, but that the deceitfulness of riches too often proves the ruin of their possessors. The ungodly rich men have already "received

their consolation;" all the comfort they ever have is in this world. All this, as well as the contrast in the case of the pious poor, is strikingly illustrated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. He died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." And Abraham said to him: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Let this be attended to by the man who is made rich, and the glory of whose house is increased. Let it be noted, too, that a man may be the subject of this woe, though he be not possessed of what the world would call a great fortune. Every man may be said to be rich who is in easy circumstances, according to his station in life. Let those who are thus situated think of their danger. Let them remember the words of Christ: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God:" or, as the sentiment is explained by our Lord himself: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" And let them be counselled to buy, to obtain freely of Christ, gold tried in the fire, that they may be truly rich, and to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves do not break through to steal.

The second blessing which our Lord here pronounces is on them that hunger: "*Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled.*" In the sermon on the mount he said: "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness"—that is, who earnestly desire the blessings of salvation; "for they shall be filled"—they shall be satisfied with these blessings. But, taking the beatitude exactly as it is here, there were many who underwent literal hunger, and other temporal privations, for Christ's sake. "Even unto this present hour," said Paul, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." As some of these hardships were already beginning to be felt by some of our Lord's disciples, this benediction was very suitable. He assures them that, to whatever privations they might be now exposed, they should be abundantly satisfied at last. The same promise is made, however, to all his followers who may be tried in a similar way. And should not this be very encouraging to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but are obliged to be satisfied with the coarsest fare, or who are, perhaps, even pinched for daily bread? Even now they are, in the spiritual sense, invited and accustomed to eat that which is good, and to let their souls delight themselves in fatness: and when they leave this world they shall go to the land of plenty, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, but the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them unto fountains of living water.

Contrasted with this blessing is the woe denounced on them that are full, in the 25th verse : “ *Woe unto you that are full ! for ye shall hunger.* ” By those who are full, we are to understand those who live plentifully and luxuriously, placing their supreme gratification in what they eat and drink, while they are strangers to the fear of God and the faith of the Gospel. Such shall suffer hunger, if not in being pinched in this world, at least in being deprived of every gratification in the next. Thus saith the Lord God to such wicked persons : “ Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. ” — “ Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry : behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty : behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. ”

The third blessing runs thus : *Blessed are ye that weep now ; for ye shall laugh.* It is obvious that this blessing cannot apply to every kind of weeping ; for there are tears shed for reasons altogether earthly, and there is a sorrow of the world that worketh death. But, on all who weep as the disciples of Christ, or for the sake of Christ, or because of any penitential or truly Christian feeling, on all such this blessing rests. All such “ shall laugh ; ” that is, shall greatly rejoice. “ Blessed are they that mourn, ” that mourn after a godly sort, “ for they shall be comforted. ” Be of good cheer, then, all ye mourners in Zion ; though your weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning. ” But we must not enlarge on this beautiful beatitude.

The woe placed in contrast with it in the 25th verse is this : “ *Woe unto you that laugh now ! for ye shall mourn and weep ;* ” that is, woe to them who are merry in sin, who laugh at the things of God, or, who can laugh while they have no interest in God. “ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night till wine inflame them ! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. ” — “ As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool : this also is vanity. ” Think of this, if ye can think seriously of any thing, ye giddy sinners ; think of the danger of your mirth soon landing you in outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. “ Go to now, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. ” — “ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep : let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ” Look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn : and seek that, by the sadness of your countenance, your heart may be made better.

The fourth and last benediction our Lord here pronounces is as follows : “ *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy ; for behold, your reward is great in heaven ;* ”

for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." This is a blessing on those who should be hated, separated from men's company, (which seems to refer chiefly to excommunication), reproached, or spoken evil of falsely, and have their names cast out as evil, or all censures and stigmas affixed to them, for Christ's sake, for their adherence to him and his cause. Already were these things beginning to be, in some degree, fulfilled in the disciples; and the time soon arrived when there was a more complete fulfilment of what he foretold—that they should be "put out of the synagogue," and that they should be "hated of all men for his name's sake." In reference to these trials, our Lord calls on his disciples, not only to bear them patiently, but to rejoice greatly in the prospect of the gracious reward of heavenly happiness and honour, and also in the thought that, though thus treated, they would only be treated as the prophets and other good men had been before them, and would thereby be shown to be of the same spirit with them, possessed of the same present blessings, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance.—And is there not enough here, Christians, to support you under any hatred and reproach to which you may be exposed for the Saviour's name? You must, indeed, expect, more or less, to incur the dislike of some, if you are faithful. "If ye were of the world," saith Christ, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." You must expect, at times, to be evil spoken of, and to be pertinaciously accused of things which your mind never entertained, and which your heart disdains—and that not only by those who despise every thing sacred, but perhaps by some who imagine that, while they are thus opposing you, they are doing God service. "But fear ye not the reproach of men; neither be afraid of their revilings."—"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: on their part he is evil spoken of, on your part he is glorified." Be steady to his cause; follow resolutely the path of duty; and he will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day.

As contrasted with this fourth and last blessing our Lord denounces, in the 26th verse, his fourth and last woe: "*Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*" The Jews of old reviled and persecuted Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah, and almost all the true prophets, because of their faithful dealing with them: but they commended the false prophets, because they spoke unto them smooth things, and prophesied deceits, and they loved to have it so. What is here said is peculiarly applicable to teachers of religion, for they must declare the whole mind of God, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear; and if they never say what is displeasing to some who are in error and in sin, it must be because they are keeping back something that

ought to be declared. There is here, however, a very serious consideration universally applicable. Think of this woe, you who congratulate yourselves on your having entirely, or almost entirely escaped being in any way reproached on account of religion. Though you may be disposed to impute this to your extraordinary good sense and prudence, it may be that it ought rather to be imputed to your indifference and unfaithfulness. Let us all be faithful to Christ, whatever may be the opinion of others. The good opinion of the pious is, indeed, desirable, and generally attainable by those who are themselves pious; but we ought to be equally superior to the reproaches and the praises of the wicked. It is, indeed, a very small thing that we should be judged of man's judgment, when he who is to judge us all is the Lord.

From these blessings and woes, we learn *how erroneous, and how contrary to Scripture, are the ideas which men of the world entertain of happiness*. A vast variety of opinions prevail among them on this subject; but it is universally agreed among them, that four things chiefly contribute to human felicity—namely, wealth, the indulgence of appetite, exemption from trouble, and human applause. To these ideas, however, the four blessings and the four woes, here recorded, are directly opposed. No doubt there is a certain kind of enjoyment in these things; but it is hollow, temporary, and unsatisfying, and it cannot make up for the want of spiritual and eternal blessings. The Son of God, who knoweth all things, and who cannot err in this, teaches that there are blessings far greater, and woes far more grievous, than any which the worldly desire or dread. Would to God that you were all thoroughly convinced of this truth, and properly influenced by it! Cease, ye deluded votaries of fancied pleasure, to mistake the shadow for the substance, and to imagine that he should be called happy whose happiness will not last. Return, through the Redeemer, to the living God, who is the only centre and source of blessedness. Thus, besides escaping the tremendous woes which are suspended over your heads, you will become possessed of a happiness of which you had no conception—a happiness large as your wishes, and lasting as eternity. And as for you, ye genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus, envy not the wicked in their prosperity; be contented with your lot, whatever it may be; and be faithful to your Redeemer, through good report and evil report, in riches and poverty, in pain and pleasure, in honour and reproach, in life and death. Rest assured that He who declares you blessed will actually make you blessed. Even now you will find it to be so. You will “reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you.” You will find that your light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for you a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.

LECTURE XXIX.

LUKE VI. 27-36.

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. 28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and unto the evil. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

It is very common for those who have erroneous, or defective, views of the atonement, and of the way of a sinner's acceptance with God, to profess great admiration of the morality of the Gospel: and it sometimes happens that men, with high pretensions to soundness in the faith, and to deep spiritual experience, and strictness of principle, have little relish for the beautiful scriptural delineations of the Christian temper and conduct. It is unnecessary to inquire which of these two classes deviates the more widely from truth and propriety, when both go so far astray; but, it is of great importance that we ourselves should escape the error of the one and of the other, that we should listen with equal readiness to every part of the counsel of God, that we should both submit ourselves to the divinely appointed means for effecting a radical change in our state, and study distinctly to understand, and labour actually to become, what, in disposition and conduct, God would have us to be. The passage now read delineates one of the most distinguishing and most beautiful characteristics of genuine Christian morality, namely, *love to our enemies*. A few other things are indeed introduced, especially the golden rule; but they are all introduced as connected with this duty, and in a way calculated to illustrate and enforce it. With an earnest desire that our meditations at this time may be blessed of God to cherish in our souls this difficult but necessary disposition, let us proceed to examine the beautiful and comprehensive directions here given by our Divine Redeemer.

Our Lord had just told his disciples that, if they were faithful,

they must expect to be hated and evil-spoken of, and persecuted in different ways: in connection with that, he now goes on to warn them not to return such usage, but to cherish the very opposite spirit of love. “*But I say unto you who hear, Love your enemies.*” He begins with teaching that the primary and most essential part of our duty to our enemies is to love them, to entertain towards them real, unfeigned, inward affection. The word “enemies,” must be taken as including not only those who are so in the worst sense, and who have actually done us some very great injury, or who would seek to take our life, or utterly to ruin us; but also all who are so in any degree, and all who are alienated from us, or from whom we are alienated in affection: and it thus comes to have a very extensive application. The precept is thus introduced by our Lord, in the sermon on the mount:* “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies.” It was indeed said in the law, “Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people: but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”† As to hating their enemies, however, that was a most perverse deduction from the precept by blinded teachers and revengeful men. Even the law of Moses, though particularly calling for love to those of their own nation, was sufficiently explicit as to the duty of the Jews to strangers and enemies. Thus, in *Exod. xxiii. 4*: “If thou meet thine enemy’s ox, or his ass, going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help him.” “Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”‡ Our Lord, however, found very unworthy ideas prevailing on this subject, and was therefore very particular in correcting them. In the parable of the good Samaritan, he taught, that we should treat every man as a neighbour who comes within the reach of our benevolence. He on various occasions expounded the duty of love, as binding in the most extensive application, and insisted fully on the incumbency of our loving even our enemies. Here observe, that Christian love is of two kinds—the love of approving complacency, and the love of benevolence. Every human being is entitled to our love of benevolence, or wishing him well, whatever be his character: but it is only those whose character is amiable, who are entitled to our love of approbation and complacency. Applying this distinction to our enemies, we ought to love them with benevolence, or wish them well, though their general character should be bad: and, if their general character be good (which, we should remember, is quite possible, though, from infirmity on their side, or ours, or on both sides, there may arise some causes of difference), we should also love them with a love of approba-

* *Matt. v. 43.*† *Lev. xix. 18.*‡ See also *Prov. xxiv. 17.*

tion and complacency, in so far as they are entitled to it. Inward love, then, is the first thing required.

But our Lord proceeds, secondly, to exhort: "*Do good to them that hate you.*" He will have the love which is seated in the heart, to manifest itself in kind actions. Beautiful, to this effect, are the words of Paul to the Romans: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head;" that is, melt him down to tenderness, as the metal is melted in the crucible when fire is placed above it, as well as beneath it. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We should seek opportunities of doing good to those who dislike us, or have injured us. We should seek to do good to them in their substance, in their friends, in their bodies, and, if possible, in their souls.

Thirdly, Christ goes on to teach, that our love to our enemies should manifest itself in our words: "*Bless them that curse you.*" The cursing may here refer to judicial cursing, or anathematizing. Our Lord taught his disciples that, if they should thus be excommunicated and cursed by councils, and rulers of synagogues, they were to submit patiently, and even bless their opposers. But this seems to refer chiefly to the cursings and revilings to which they would be exposed from private individuals. So, the apostle Peter exhorts Christians to be "courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing."—"Bless them that persecute you," says Paul; "bless, and curse not." It is not easy to conceive anything more opposite to this beautiful precept, or more horrible in itself, than what some of us may have witnessed, or at least heard of—two men abusing each other in passionate cursing; or setting themselves deliberately and coolly to contend with horrid oaths and imprecations, that it might be determined who was to carry off the prize of impiety. Such daring profanity must make a wise man tremble. As for those who can be guilty of it, God is indeed a God of long-suffering, else he would never once allow such an affront to be offered to him, without taking them at their word, and sending them with their blasphemies together instantly down to perdition. If there be a man who has been guilty of this, or anything like this, let conscience do its duty with him: let him pray God that he may be forgiven, and let him ever after fear an oath. "Bless them that curse you," is the Saviour's command.

In close connection with blessing, our Lord directs us to "*pray for those who despitefully use*" us, for those who in words, or actions, treat us contumeliously. "Pray for them," said he, in the sermon on the mount, "who despitefully use you." To pray in a right spirit, and in a right way, for those who have treated us ill, is a truly Christian exercise. If we have the inclination, this is one way of exercising our love, which is always in our power, and of which no obstacle can prevent the operation. Scripture furnishes, for our imitation, several examples of

such prayer. David, in the time of his enemies' trouble, mourned and prayed for them.* "False witnesses did rise up : they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth : I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend, or brother : I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." In this David's case was typical of Christ's, whose merciful prayer for his murderers was : "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." So, when Stephen's enemies were stoning him, immediately before he expired, "he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." "At my first answer," said Paul, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me : I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Let us attend, then, to this duty. When men use us ill, let us pray for their conversion, if they seem to be without religion altogether : and if they seem, on the whole, to fear God, let us pray for their forgiveness in respect of their enmity to us, for their being brought to a better disposition of mind with regard to us, and for every temporal and spiritual blessing to be bestowed on them.

Our Lord proceeds, in the 29th verse : "*And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other ; and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.*" These precepts may appear, at first, unreasonable, and almost impossible to be complied with. Let them, however, be properly understood. There are several passages of Scripture in which affirmations are made positively, but which must be understood with explanatory limitation ; and this is one of these. This verse seems to contain two proverbial expressions, teaching how we ought to behave in most instances in which we are injured, especially in the less important instances, and those wherein the public good does not require our vindication. It is unreasonable to suppose that this, or any other precept in Scripture, lays down, in all cases, the doctrine of absolute non-resistance. It is undoubtedly not only lawful, but incumbent to resist the man who shall attempt to murder, or ruin ourselves, or our friends ; and so in similar important instances ; and nothing but a forced and fanciful interpretation could have led to an opposite opinion. But the injuries here specified are comparatively slight, and these, and even some greater injuries, had better be overlooked in most cases. In those cases, too, which must be noticed, we should proceed, not in the way of private revenge, but in the way of seeking legal redress, the law being an ordinance of God for restraining the lawless and disobedient. Even here, however, many things should be borne with, rather than go to law. And what more reasonable, or more conducive to our own happiness and the public good, than this gentle, patient, forgiv-

* Ps. xxxv. 11.

ing conduct? As to proceeding to destroy the life of those who insult them, to destroy their life by hasty violence, or by cool and premeditated duelling; men may attempt to defend such actions as they please, but they are sheer murder. If men were generally to give way to the passion of revenge, the earth would become an Aceldama—a field of blood. Were they even to be seeking legal redress for every trifle, human life would become a burden and a scene of perpetual vexation. “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.”—“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Verse 30: “*Give to every man that asketh of thee.*” Here some limitation is not only reasonable, but often unavoidable. Applications for charity may be so numerous as entirely to exceed a man’s ability to meet them: or, though it may be just possible for him to comply with them, he may not be able to do so without sacrificing the prior claims of justice to those to whom he is indebted, and of natural affection to those near connections who are dependent on him. Besides, while some are ashamed to ask, who are in great want, others are clamorous in asking when they have no need. These, and all such circumstances, are to be prudently considered. Still, however, this and similar precepts do require very extended liberality, according to our means. They require us to be “ready to distribute, and willing to communicate,” “to “give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” And when, in this particular connection, our Lord requires us to give to every man that asketh, he probably intimates that we should not confine our liberality to our friends, and to those who we know love us; but be ready also, if need be, to assist our enemies—those who dislike us and have done us evil. He adds: “*And of him that taketh away thy goods,*” thy possessions, in an unjust manner, “*ask them not again.*” In many cases we ought rather to put up with some loss, than enter into disputes; we should not be hasty to demand restitution. Such seems to be the general meaning of this precept; for we cannot suppose it requires an absolute sacrifice of our property to injustice, in all instances.

Next follows what, for its great excellence, has been called “The golden rule:” “*And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.*” Were this precept handled by itself, and not as a part of a passage inculcating the duty of love to our enemies, the following observations might be enlarged on: but as it is, we must rest satisfied with a mere statement of them. We observe, first, That the rule of duty which our Lord here lays down, is to be deduced from the simple consideration of what we wish done to ourselves; nevertheless, there are several other considerations, all of which tend to explain the rule, and some of which are even necessary to its right application. Secondly, The usual way of illustrating it by supposing a change of circumstances, if not necessary, is yet, in a great many in-

stances, peculiarly happy, and well calculated to bring it home to our feelings:—supposing, for example, the situation of parents and children, masters and servants, debtors and creditors reversed; in other words, reflecting how we should like other people to treat us, were they in our circumstances, and we in theirs. Thirdly, It is not what others really do to us, but what we wish them to do, that should be our rule; and between these two, there will often be found a complete contrast. Fourthly, It must be granted that it is not absolutely everything which we may wish others to do to us which should be our rule, but what we lawfully and reasonably wish them to do. There are many things which a man might be well pleased with, and even waywardly desire, but which it would never once occur to any one ought to be given him. Thus, a poor man might wish a very rich man to give him at once half of his fortune. Such an extravagant wish could furnish no rule of action; though a poor man's reasonable wish for moderate relief does furnish the rule.

Such is the meaning of this precept, and its excellence might be largely shown from such considerations as these:—from its reasonableness, as it recommends itself to every one possessed of common sense;* from its plainness, as it is intelligible to the meanest capacity; and from its extent, as it includes and readily applies to all persons in all circumstances. “This,” said our Lord of this rule, in his sermon on the mount, “is the law and the prophets:” being synonymous with our loving our neighbour as ourselves, it includes the substance of the second table of the law.

But this precept is now to be noticed by us as forming a part of a connected discourse. It is introduced by directions for loving our enemies, and it is immediately followed by additional reasonings on that subject; it is, therefore, itself to be viewed as illustrating and enforcing the same duty. It readily teaches us, in several respects, how we should conduct ourselves to those with whom we have any difference, by leading us to think of what treatment we expect of them. Do we not expect that they should treat us with fairness? that they should not allow passion to blind their judgment? that they should not harbour hatred, or a desire of revenge? that they should not misrepresent us? that they should be ready to be reconciled to us? that they should not insist on unreasonable and degrading conditions of reconciliation? that if we become afflicted, they should feel for us? and that if we shall stand in need of their help, and it be in their power to help us, they should readily do so? Thus it is that the golden rule teaches us our duty to them in return, and enforces benevolence, if we may so say, even by the very principle of selfishness, or, at least, by a correct deduction from an enlightened view of self-interest.

In the 32d verse, our Lord addresses himself again directly

* A similar sentiment occurs in Homer, Herodotus, Polybins, Isocrates, Quinctilian, and other ancient writers. Of this numerous examples are given by Wetstein.

to the subject, of which, however, he had not lost sight: "*For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them who do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do the same.*" If we love, and do good to those only who are particularly attached to us, and have been very serviceable to us, that is no more than what common natural feelings and decency lead men of the worst character to attend to, and is, therefore, no evidence of genuine religion, or of true Christian benevolence. If you do only this, "what do you more than others?" said our Lord in Matthew. More is justly expected of Christians, than men of the world. Unto whomsoever God has given much, of them he will require the more.

Verse 34: "*And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*" If men only lend in cases where they calculate on a certain and full return, and that with interest, or, at least calculate on other favours which will be a full equivalent, or more than equivalent, no thanks are due to them; for they are only consulting their own advantage. No doubt, men ought to act prudently in lending. It is not true charity, but culpable thoughtlessness, which leads any man unnecessarily to lend what, if he lose, would ruin himself and his family, or very materially injure his substance. At the same time, there are many who can afford to lend without such danger; and it is well known, that a judicious and seasonable loan is often very useful, and a truly benevolent deed. In such cases, and to an extent not too heavy for the lenders to bear, loans may very properly be sometimes given, where the prospect of repayment is but doubtful. It is part of the character of the good man, * that he "showeth favour and lendeth." In Matt. v. 42, Christ says: "From him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." Our Lord is careful also, to teach that such favours should not be confined to special friends, but liberally extended, even to enemies, when they are in need. He even multiplies words to impress this lesson upon us: "*But love ye your enemies and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.*" He then enforces the duty by this consideration: "*And your reward shall be great.*" The grace of Christian charity, which the Lord himself enables his people to exercise, he will also graciously reward. It will be accompanied with satisfaction and a providential blessing in this world; and it will be abundantly recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord enforces compliance with this duty, also, by this additional motive: "*Ye shall be the children of the Highest;*" that is, so shall ye appear, and be proved to be, the reconciled and obedient children of the Most High God. Bearing his image, ye shall be shown to belong to his family. "*For he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*" To both the rebellious and obedient

* Ps. cxii. 5.

are his providential favours shown: "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good: and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The kindness of God in giving his Son to die for his enemies, and in making offer to them of the richest blessings through him, is also a powerful reason why we should attend to this duty. And on the whole, our Lord sums up his exhortations on this particular subject with the words: *Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*" What example can we so well copy, as that of Him who is absolute perfection, and to whom we ourselves are so deeply indebted for his mercy? This, and all his imitable perfections, ought to be carefully imitated by us. "As he who hath called you is holy," writes Peter, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

And now, my friends, to fix our attention still more closely, in concluding, on this one duty, which is the leading point inculcated in this passage, the duty of loving our enemies:—When we reflect on our own feelings and conduct in reference to it, have we not all, more or less, reason for *deep humiliation before God*? Some of us may be conscious that we are here peculiarly deficient—that we have very much given way to sullenness, or passion, or malice, or revengeful conduct, or at least revengeful desires. If so, we are characterized by the very opposite qualities to those of the Christian; for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of love, he is none of his. But, who of us can say that we are altogether clear in this matter? May the Lord forgive us our defects, and bestow on us his grace, to enable us to be more conscientious in this respect.

The feelings of men's minds vary as much as the features of their countenances, so that it is not to be expected that every thing we have to say, on this subject, will suit every individual, or even any one individual; but there is, probably, not one of you who will not find some of the different considerations which present themselves suitable to his own case, and calculated, with the blessing of God, to suggest profitable admonition. In this hope, we would still notice, and put you on your guard against some of the most common *sources* of that hatred which prevails among men, to their great discomfort as well as sin—sources, too, which, assuming somewhat of the appearance of what is reasonable, are found, in a great degree, to justify men, in their own eyes, for disliking each other. One of the sources of such dislike is what is called *natural antipathy*. The attachments of some have no better, or more solid foundation, than that of a mere frenzy, or natural liking, originating in a certain propensity, which is supposed to be superior to reason, and to render the application of sober thinking unnecessary, nay, improper. Hence, when this unaccountable feeling is wanting, it often happens that some men think that they are at liberty to be indifferent to their fellow-creatures, and even indulge an aversion for them, and think themselves, in a great measure, at least,

justifiable in giving way to antipathies which they imagine they cannot, or need not control. But is this reasonable, or Christian? Surely not. True love, Christian charity, is not a blind, capricious feeling, which lies at the mercy of every whim, and which may become the sport of every changing breeze: but it is a rational, steady, conscientious, pious principle. There would have been no occasion for any precept on the subject, if men had only been bound to love those whom, from a natural impulse, it was almost impossible for them not to love. Put yourselves in the place of the person whom, on account of such an antipathy, you dislike, or are in danger of disliking, and you will be immediately sensible of your error. Would you think it right in him to give way to a foolish antipathy against you? Would it convince you that he was proceeding in a reasonable, kind, and Christian manner, to say that he really could not tell why it was he disliked you, but the fact was he did dislike you? Think, then, of the golden rule. Think, too, of this, that to plead your natural antipathy to any man, as an excuse for neglecting the duty of love, is just to plead that as an apology which constitutes the very essence of your guilt.

But you may say that it is the man's *bad qualities*, and not your whims, which alienate you from him: and this suggests another source of hatred. But are you sure that he is as bad as you suppose? Are you sure that he is looked on by his friends and intimate acquaintances, in the same light as by you? Are you quite sure that the influence of envy, or of the distorting eye of prejudice, is not transforming in your estimation some of his virtues into faults? But granting that he is a bad man, and as bad as you suppose: have you not learned to distinguish between disapproving of his crimes, and hating himself? Have you forgotten the example of your heavenly Father, who causeth his sun to shine and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust?

Another source of hatred is found in *the circumstance of our temporal interest having been unjustly impaired, or opposed*. A man has taken our coat, or our cloak; that is, he has taken our substance, by false pretences, or by violence; he has done what he could to thwart our prosperity, and to ruin us; is there not, then, some excuse for our dislike? and is it to be wondered at, that we do not love him? But what though he has acted thus? should we therefore violate a divine command? Because he has injured us in our temporal inheritance, are we therefore to do ourselves a far greater injury in our spiritual and eternal inheritance? Besides, can any hatred or revenge, which we may indulge, be any compensation to us for our loss? On the contrary, will not this rather be to punish ourselves, to take revenge on ourselves, by yielding our hearts a prey to vexatious and tormenting passions?

Or, do you find another source of hatred springing up in the consideration of a man having *injured you in your good name*?—this is no doubt very trying; but it will not justify you in ne-

glecting the duty here recommended. If you were to take pains to ascertain the real state of facts, you might perhaps find that he has not said all you had supposed. You have been given to understand that he has expressly laid to your charge things that you knew not, and from your inmost soul abhorred, and that he has spoken of you in a very contumelious and disrespectful manner: and yet the whole of what he said may have been materially changed and exaggerated before it reached you. Perhaps something of this kind has sometimes happened to yourselves. You may have had reason to complain that what you said has been misrepresented and magnified: let that, therefore, teach you not to be hasty in concluding that another man has deeply or intentionally calumniated you. But suppose that you have unquestionable evidence of his having done so; inquire if you, on your part, have always been perfectly kind and charitable in your way of speaking of him. And, however these things may have been, ask yourselves what you can possibly gain by hating him. You only torment yourselves and sin against God. You cannot, by your hatred of your calumniator, efface the impression of his calumny, if any has been made. Imitate him not in his manner; but pity him, and love him, and pray for him: and while you may take more direct measures to vindicate your good name, by the practice of the virtues the most opposite to the things whereof he accuses you, your character will at last be clearly understood in the world that now is: and at all events, at the day of final reckoning, your righteousness will be brought forth as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day.

In short, whatever be the sources of your dislike, and however plausibly they may be made to furnish you with an apology for it, charge your consciences with the express command of Christ: "Love your enemies." Wherever any difference has arisen, seek a reconciliation. And rest not satisfied with any inadequate and insincere reconciliation. Rest not satisfied with saying that you have forgiven your enemy, but that you cannot see him; or with consenting to see him and to manifest the polite semblance of amity, while the hatred still lurks in your breast; or with that reconciliation to which you reluctantly consent, in order merely to avoid the scandal and the disagreeable consequences of a public contest, or to please your friends; but let your reconciliation be ready, cordial, and sincere. Study to cultivate, even towards those who have injured you, the spirit of heartfelt and practical benevolence so beautifully delineated in this passage. Be on your guard, too, as much as possible, against the commencement of quarrels. "The beginning of strife is as when a man letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with."

Think, my friends, of the delightful effects this spirit would produce on your happiness, and on the happiness of society around you. Think of the paramount authority by which it is enjoined. And think of the powerful motives by which, accord-

ing to the revelation of mercy to sinners, it is enforced. Indeed, nothing but the love of God, manifested to sinners through Jesus Christ, and brought home by the agency of the Spirit, and through the medium of faith, enlightening, reconciling, renewing, and softening the heart, can lead any man to feel and act aright towards his enemies. This is eminently and exclusively a Christian grace. Seek, then, to feel the influence of God's love to yourselves who are naturally his enemies, that *you* may be made to love *your* enemies. With what power do the scriptural view of man's selfishness, and of God's mercy, enforce this precept! Especially, with what power should they enforce it on those of you who have been savingly convinced of your own sinfulness and led to embrace the gospel! How ill does hatred become you whom God has thus loved! How ill does revenge become you whom God has thus pardoned! How ill does it become you to be sensitively alive to every trifling indignity, hasty to retaliate every slight injury, and implacable to every the least offence!—you from whom the Lord has borne so much insult—you for whom he so long waited, whose lost affections he so perseveringly sought, and so tenderly won—you whom, on your return, he has received, and continues to treat so kindly! “Let all bitterness,” then, “and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”—“Be ye, therefore, followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

LECTURE XXX.

LUKE VI. 37-40.

" Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven : 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. 39. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind ? shall they not both fall into the ditch ? 40. The disciple is not above his master : but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."

THESE verses are a continuation of Christ's sermon in the plain, and contain several pieces of important moral instruction, each of which we shall consider in order.

" *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.*" These two prohibitions will be best understood when viewed in connection ; the latter being explanatory of the former ; and it being condemnatory judgment against which we are chiefly warned. We are not to suppose that our Lord forbids justice to be administered, and sentence of condemnation to be passed, by properly constituted public judges, in civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical cases. Nor does he discharge us from forming an opinion of ourselves : for the apostle Paul says, that if we " would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Nor does Christ here absolutely prohibit us from forming, or expressing, in any case, an opinion of others : for by their fruits many men are evidently known, some favourably, and others unfavourably. He refers, chiefly, to our situation as private persons ; and, while he forbids us to usurp the office of judges, he especially guards us against rash and uncharitable judgments of the actions, motives, and state of others. We are not hastily to take up an unfavourable opinion of others ; and still less are we hastily to express it. We are not, indeed, to express an opinion against them at all, unless obviously called on to do so, with the view of promoting the cause of justice, or their reformation, or the glory of God. We must not judge men to be sinners above all others, because of great afflictions and calamities which befall them. We must not pronounce sweeping sentences of condemnation on the general character of an individual, because of some one impropriety of conduct ; or on a whole party, because of the misconduct of some who adhere to it. Where there is any room left for it, we are to exercise that charity which " believeth all things, and hopeth all things." We are not to despise, or condemn, those who differ from us in points not essential to faith and holiness. " Let not him that eateth,

despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—"But why dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."—"So then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way."* This passage strongly inculcates that, though we should adhere to the simplicity of Christian faith and practice, yet we should beware of the uncharitableness of judging all to be bad men, and rejected by God, who, in consequence of their adhering to other denominations, differ from us in forms and ceremonies. The entertaining of any such uncharitable opinions is sinful; and the expressing of them, as already noticed, is still more sinful. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law" (which expressly forbids such conduct): "but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? This strongly exposes the wickedness of the presumptuous bigots who curse and anathematize all who differ from them; as well as the daring effrontery of those who, in any way, take it upon them, as it were, to displace the Judge of all, and fix the eternal state of others.

Now, the reasons against rash judgment are numerous and weighty. By such conduct, we are guilty of injustice and cruelty to others; we prove that we ourselves are not what we ought to be; we foster malice in our own minds; and we disobey and insult God. But, the particular consideration by which our Lord here enforces the exhortation is, that if we do not judge and condemn others, we shall not be judged and condemned ourselves: and, of course, the converse of this holds true—that if we do judge and condemn others, we shall ourselves be judged and condemned.

In the parallel passage of the sermon on the mount, the words are: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." The apostle James says: "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy." This is often fulfilled, in some degree, in the treatment men receive from their fellow-creatures. The meek and the charitable are generally treated with indulgence: and those who are tender of the character of others, have credit for that trait in their own. On the other hand, those who attack others are, in their turn, not spared, but

* Rom. xiv. 3.

even made worse than they are. It is a general rule, that men are thus repaid in kind, even in this world. He who, like Ishmael, has his hand against every man, has every man's hand against him. But our Lord seems here to refer chiefly to the sentence which will be pronounced by the Judge of all. Men have all to appear before his tribunal, where they have to be judged according to their works, and to give an account of all their hard speeches, and of every idle word. Then those who have been truly charitable, shall be acquitted; but those who have been chargeable with uncharitableness and other sins, and have so continued to the last, impenitent and unforgiving, shall be condemned. Well, therefore, does the Redeemer here caution us against rash judgment; and well does Paul exhort: "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

Upon the whole here, let us all feel admonished to pay a conscientious regard to this precept. There is too much of this hasty censoriousness among us. As the best preservative against it, let us cherish the opposite virtues. Let us put the most favourable construction on men's actions of which they will admit; let us never impute actions to a bad motive, unless the proof be irresistible; let us ever feel gratified to witness what is good, and to give commendation where it is due: and, where we cannot but see that there is something radically evil, let us be not glad, but grieved, and let us be careful to pray, and to do whatever else we can, for their reformation and welfare.

Our Lord proceeds to exhort: "*Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*" An opportunity, and a call for the exercise of forgiveness, are presented, when any injury is done to us, in our person, or property, or connections, or character, or feelings. It may be remarked, too, that injuries must be known, and in some degree felt, as injuries, before they can be said to be forgiven. Forgiveness implies, inwardly, that we do not indulge angry or malevolent feelings towards those who have injured us, but that we love them, and wish them well: and it implies, outwardly, that we do not retaliate the injuries they have done us, or in any way seek to do them evil; but that we live, or at least be willing to live, in friendly terms with them, and do them all the good in our power. This is, unquestionably, a very difficult duty. The motives to it, however, are many and powerful, as the necessity of it to the Christian character is indispensable. Many a time is it distinctly enjoined in Scripture: and when Peter came to Christ, and said: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but until seventy times seven." The good effect of forgiveness on our own happiness, and that of society, is a powerful recommendation of it. He who has got such a victory over the irascible propensities of his nature, as to have heartily forgiven

those who have injured him, has thereby relieved his own mind from a load of vexation; and by acting on that victory over himself, he contributes to diffuse the same pleasures of harmony all around him. This duty is also enforced by the example of our blessed Lord, who even for his murderers prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." But the particular argument by which our Lord here enforces on us the duty of forgiving others, is its collateral connection with our own forgiveness: "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." I say collateral connection, because there is merely a collateral, though inseparable, connection between our forgiving others, and God's forgiving us, and not that connection which subsists between an effect and its efficient, or meritorious, or instrumental cause. Frequently has the question been put, in the course of catechetical examinations, Is our forgiving other people the reason why God forgives us?—and frequently has it been answered in the affirmative, and entirely wrong. Apart from any particular precept, and judging from those passages of Scripture in which the method of a sinner's pardon is distinctly treated of as the leading subject, no person, who has any correct and comprehensive view of the subject, will hesitate in acknowledging that the *efficient* cause of forgiveness is God himself; "for who can forgive sins but God only?" that the *meritorious* cause of forgiveness is the righteousness of Christ—in other words, that forgiveness is for his sake; and that the *instrumental* cause, or the means through which sinners are forgiven for Christ's sake, is faith. This is exactly the doctrine of justification, which blessing consists chiefly in pardon, or forgiveness. And this is a fundamental doctrine, which ought never to be lost sight of. We may be sure, too, that no part of Scripture can be really inconsistent with this doctrine, which constitutes the very substance of the gospel, and which is stated at great length, both argumentatively and practically, especially in the Epistles. This passage, concerning forgiveness, in particular, cannot be inconsistent with that doctrine. It would surely be a gross abuse of this, and similar passages, to deduce from them the conclusion, that forgiving others can deserve pardon from God, or, that any one can be forgiven but in the way already stated. In fact, the duty of forgiving is just like every other duty, in that it is expressly enjoined, and yet cannot be properly discharged but through grace given to us. Besides, those who are themselves forgiven are of a forgiving disposition; while those who continue implacable and unforgiving, evidence that they are not forgiven, and so continuing, cannot hope to be forgiven. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven," implies neither precedence of time, nor meritorious, nor instrumental efficacy, but inseparable connection. Perhaps we are also to consider our Lord as here addressing professors of the gospel, of whom it may be truly said, that it is only when in this, as in other respects, with regard to their integrity, their

hearts condemn them not, that they have confidence towards God.

Let us not, however, because of any misunderstanding, or abuse, of the lesson here taught, explain it away, or be unwilling to receive it in its full importance. That we cannot have the forgiveness of God, continuing unforgiving ourselves, is repeatedly taught in Scripture, in the strongest terms. When we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" we bind down ourselves under the guilt of our sins, if we do not forgive others. It is particularly worthy of remark, too, that immediately after the conclusion of that prayer, our Lord directs the close attention of his disciples to the importance of that particular petition, by subjoining: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The parable, too, in the 18th chapter of Matthew, which concludes as follows, deserves our most serious attention: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." May the Lord enable us all to forgive, as we need, and as we hope, to be forgiven! Especially must this duty be considered as binding on those who profess to have received the divine forgiveness, through the Lord Jesus Christ. To all such, the beautiful exhortation of the apostle ought to come home with sweetly constraining power: "Be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."—"Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Our Lord goes on to inculcate another branch of Christian benevolence, in the 38th verse: "*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*" He here exhorts us to give of our substance, and that, too, liberally, to those who may stand in need. This description of the requital of liberality is taken from a person measuring corn; it being well known that he who, in that action, presses down the corn, and shakes it, and causes it to run over, gives large measure. With regard, again, to the expression giving "into the bosom," * or lap, or

* *Κελευς*. Herodotus says that when Croesus had presented Alcmaeon with as much gold as he could carry about his person, he, among various contrivances, put on a very large robe, and filled all the bosom, or wide fold of it, with the precious metal. *Ἐνδύς*

fold of the garment, as it might have been translated ;—this is an allusion to the custom of the Jews, and other nations, who wore a long robe, or mantle, in part of which, when gathered up, they were accustomed to receive and carry a considerable quantity of various articles. Thus Boaz said to Ruth : “ Bring the veil ” (sheet, apron, or loose covering) “ thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her, and she went into the city.” The instance in 2 Kings iv. 39, is still more in point : “ And one went into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lapful.” So also, in Proverbs : “ The lot is cast into the lap.”

It is the will of God that the abundance of some should be a supply for the want of others. On those who are rich in this world's goods, and shut up their compassion against their brethren in need, the Word of God pronounces its sharp condemnation. Nor must it be thought that a man is exempted from that censure, or to be considered as complying with the precept of almsgiving, merely because he does not refuse altogether, but gives something. He must not only give, but give liberally ; that is, in proportion to his property, according as God hath prospered him. What may be well, and even handsome, in one, may be shameful niggardliness in another. The poor widow who cast in the two mites into the treasury at the temple, cast in more, in this sense, than all the rich men ; for they cast in of their abundance, but she of her penury, even all the living that she had. There are very few who have not something in their power, though it were only to divide a morsel of bread with those who are still more in need than themselves. But even those who may have nothing to give, are not cut off from the virtual observance of this precept, for the will is accepted for the deed : “ If there be first of all a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not.” The divine precept calls for extensive and generous liberality. “ The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand.”—“ Give a portion to seven and also to eight.”—“ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” And those who are not rich, but capable of labour, are required to “ labour, working with their hands the thing which is good, that they may have to give to him that needeth.”

While this duty might be enforced by all the principles of human sympathy, and all the cogent motives arising from the

κίθονα μίγαν,—*τον κολπον παντα πλησάμενος χρυσου*. The following passage occurs in Livy, “ Tum Romanus, sinu ex toga facto, Hic, inquit, vobis pacem et bellum portamus.” A similar passage occurs in Polybius. In the words of Raphaelius, “ Est ergo hoc loco *κολπος* laxa curvitas seu cavitas in veste, qua aliquid excipere possumus.”

love of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are here encouraged to attend to it *from a regard to our own interest*. Though Scripture condemns that exclusive and sinful regard to our own advantage, which is called selfishness, it, at the same time, in perfect consistency with the principle of generosity, and indeed, as seems necessary, in order fully to meet the mixed constitution of our nature, acknowledges, and brings forward into action, the principle of an enlightened regard to self-interest, or our own personal advantage. Our Lord, then, here says that if we give, it shall be given to us, even the same measure that we mete, nay, overflowing measure. This rule of reciprocity is found to apply very generally :* but we are here concerned only with its application to the charitable. Charitable actions, proceeding from worldly motives, receive, for the most part, a temporal reward : and charitable actions, proceeding from religious motives, receive, generally a temporal, and always a spiritual and eternal reward of grace. It is plainly this truly Christian and acceptable giving to which we ought to attend. With regard to the effect of liberality on men's prosperity in life, it has often been remarked that what has been piously and charitably given is seldom missed, and is generally made up in some other way. It is easy for the Lord thus providentially to prosper, in various ways, those who honour him with their substance, as well as to thwart the endeavours of those who refuse to give to him a proper acknowledgment from what is his own. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." The case of the widow of Zarephath may be considered as a miraculous exemplification of a principle which is habitually at work in the ordinary providential government of God. She shared what she thought would be her last morsel with the prophet Elijah ; but, behold, her barrel of meal wasted not, neither did her cruse of oil fail, till the day that the Lord sent rain and plenty to the land. God, indeed, undertakes to repay whatever is thus given. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." He will pay him again, either in property or in some other way. The liberality in question is repaid, partly in the very pleasure accompanying it ; for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It is often repaid in part, in the prayers of those who are assisted, and in the esteem and good will of others. It is given back in deliverance and comfort in the time of trouble ; not in the way of self-righteous complacency, but in the way of gracious communications from that God in whose mercy the merciful trust. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed upon the earth : and thou wilt

* Judg. i. 7—Adoni-bezek.

not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. I said, Lord be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." We know, too, that special notice will be taken of deeds of charity at the last day, when men shall be judged according to their works; and that these deeds will be "recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Now, my brethren, this precept concerning liberal distribution, is given, not that it may be merely referred to as an excellence of the Christian code of morality, not that it may be merely listened to, and commended, and applied to others, but chiefly that it may be obeyed by ourselves. No doubt, discretion ought to be used by us in our almsgivings, lest that should be wasted and abused, which might be far better applied. But, as proper opportunities occur for our private benevolence, and especially on the regularly returning calls on our public charity, the proceeds of which, beyond all doubt, are with us, generally speaking, most prudently and economically applied: we ought, according to our ability, not only to give, but to give liberally. The following passage, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, places the duty of such liberality, and the encouragement to it, on a truly Christian basis, and in a very striking point of view: 'This I say, he who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now, he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:) being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; (whiles by the experiment of this ministration, they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men :) and by their prayer for you, who long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!'

Verse 39: "*And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?*" In Matt. xv. 14, we find that our Lord spoke this parable on another occasion, when he expressly applied it to the Pharisees, who had a great influence in leading the people, and among whom the most of their teachers were found. The Pharisees, being offended at Christ's doctrine concerning what defiles a man, he

said: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." In the 23d chapter of Matthew, too, he rebukes them sharply, as "blind," and "blind guides." With a peculiar reference to them, the parable applies to all teachers of religion. Now, this is a subject which requires to be treated with much tenderness and humility. It is difficult to conceive anything more unbecoming than for teachers, who are themselves, it may be, blind, and who, at the best, are fallible, and compassed with infirmity, to pour forth invectives against other teachers: and yet this is pleasing to many; for, such is fallen human nature, that it too often delights in scandal and satirical abuse—in short, in whatever is pungent, whatever be its moral bearing, and its inconsistency with truth and charity. Surely, our Lord spoke this parable, not that we might thence take an opportunity of bringing railing accusations against our brethren, but that we might thereby endeavour to instruct others, and especially our own hearers, and at the same time benefit ourselves. We think, it may be, that *we* are knowing guides: be it so; but let every one of us attend to the apostle's admonition, especially in so far as we are deficient and inconsistent: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" But, though we ought to approach this subject with charity, and meekness, and godly fear, and jealousy over ourselves, we must not, from motives of false delicacy, or the fear of man, be guilty of the unfaithfulness of passing it over, when it is strongly presented to our view, as it is in this passage. Such things as the following, then, are not to be forgotten or disguised. It is not to be forgotten that it was expressly foretold that there should be false teachers abroad in the world, and that many should follow them. According to Peter,* "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil-spoken of." Nor are such passages as the following written in vain: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."—"His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."—"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And it is not to be disguised, indeed it would be affectation to pretend

* 2 Pet. ii. 1; see also 1 Tim. iv. 1.

to overlook the fact, that there is a radical difference in teachers, as to their views and procedure; some plainly departing from the leading principles of the gospel, perhaps also being habitually inattentive to the welfare of the sheep; and others, though, of course, imperfect, distinguished for their adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus, and for faithfulness and diligence. Now, to ask whether the former be safe guides in religion, is the same as to put the question, "Can the blind lead the blind?" It is too plain to require a word of illustration or proof, that he cannot lead the blind who is himself literally blind; and that if he attempt it, both he and the person whom he pretends to lead, must be expected to go astray, and fall together. So it is in religion, generally speaking. There are, no doubt, instances in which the hearer rises superior to the means which he enjoys: but the general rule is, and must be expected to be, that, where God has many souls to bring home to himself, there he gives pastors eminently according to his own heart; and that where the ministry is erroneous and lax, there the state of religion is low. Nor, however melancholy, is there any way of escaping the conclusion, that both the blind leaders and the blind who are led, continuing such, must, at last, fall into the pit of perdition. For wandering stars there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Nor can those whom they have been the instruments of leading astray escape, seeing they had the means of judging, and ought to have judged, for themselves. Thus we read, in Isa. ix. 16. "The leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed." It is not, indeed, to be expected that the people should surpass their teachers.

Accordingly, it is said, in the 40th verse: "*The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*" This verse may possibly relate to Christ himself, as we read of him elsewhere* teaching his disciples to expect to be treated by the world as he was. But it seems more natural to consider this verse as immediately connected with the 39th verse, and illustrative of the parable it contains. Scholars, in general, do not even attain to the standard of their teacher; and even those who are considered as perfected, and have their education finished, by him, may be supposed to be only equal to him. So, in the visible Church, the rule mentioned in Hosea holds very generally true: There shall be like people, like priest." Hence, the danger of blind guides is obvious, as they keep those who trust to them in fatal ignorance, or involve them in fatal error.

There is, in this parable, matter of warning and instruction, both to ministers and to hearers. First, there is much *demanding the serious consideration of those who are in the ministry of the gospel or have a view to it.* This parable furnishes a warning to those who are unfit for the ministry by reason of blindness—that is, ignorance,—not to be guilty of the presumption of intru-

* Matt. x. 24.

ding into that sacred office. How presumptuous to pretend to show others the way of life, when they are ignorant of it, and are not walking in it themselves! Gross ignorance on the part of a guide may be productive of as fatal consequences as intentionally leading astray. The incapacity and errors of a commander have often occasioned as great a loss of men in an army as would have been occasioned by absolute treachery. Unskilfulness and bad management may as completely ruin a man's own affairs, or the affairs of others intrusted to him, as profligacy or dishonesty. So, where there is either error or ignorance, on the part of ministers, the consequences must be expected to be very bad. As one check on this evil, the Head of the Church has appointed that no man should take up this office of himself, but that it should be given in way of call and ordination; those who are already intrusted with ministerial things, committing them "to faithful men who shall be able to teach others." This regular outward appointment, however, by no means supersedes, either before, or after it, the necessity of self-examination, deep anxiety of soul, the inward illuminating call of the Spirit, and great personal diligence to know the will of God, and to become apt to teach. It is desirable at all times, and necessary in such times as ours, that those who are to be teachers of religion should have a competent share of human learning. They may, however, be well educated in that respect, and yet be blind guides, because of their ignorance, theoretical or practical, or both, of the way of salvation. They must be savingly enlightened in the knowledge of the truth by the Holy Spirit, they must be converted to God themselves, and be actually living in the faith and hope of the gospel, before they are in a fit state to undertake to guide others, and before there can be much success expected from their instrumentality, if they have already undertaken it. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit," prayed David: "then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," said our Lord to Peter. In the sense of personal experience, ministers should be able to say with John: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ." The woe pronounced on the blind and unfaithful pastor is truly alarming: "Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." The blessing pronounced on faithful pastors is truly encouraging: God's covenant of life and peace is with them here, and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. How important is it for all teachers to discover whether they be enlightened, and to feel and act accordingly! May the Lord (as he has already done in many

cases) open the eyes of those who are yet in darkness ; and may he greatly increase the experience, the knowledge, the faithfulness, the affection, and the success, of all his accepted servants !

But there is also, in this parable, much *instruction to the people*. They are here reminded of the need they have of guides. "Understandest thou what thou readest? How can I, except some man should guide me?" God graciously promises them teachers, to whom it is their duty to attend. "Thine eyes shall see thy teachers ; and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." They are reminded, however, that it is not safe implicitly to follow every man who may bear the name of a religious leader ; because some leaders are blind, and the danger of following such must be imminent. Some people, indeed, appear very indifferent on this subject ; but it is of too great importance for any wise man to neglect. We do not find that men act so imprudently in the affairs of this world. They do not reckon it a matter of indifference whether their physician, or lawyer, or pilot, or conductor, or manager, be a man of skill and care, or not. What but insensibility to the value of their souls and of eternity, then, can make any indifferent as to what ministry they attend? "Beloved," says John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." It is the right and the duty of the people to prove the instruction of guides by the Word of God : "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." No doubt, some even like to have smooth things said them, like many of old who, when the prophets prophesied falsely, "loved to have it so." But those who regard their duty and their safety are of another mind. The rule of inspiration is clear, both from the Old and from the New Testament : "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."—"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness ; he is proud, knowing nothing ;"—"from such withdraw thyself." But the people should also feel reminded to look through all human guides to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without which all means will prove in vain. They should trust in the Lord, who hath said : "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye." How greatly are those leaders and their followers to be pitied, who go on in darkness together ! The disciple and the master must then fare alike.

It must neither be forgotten nor disguised, that when the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. But, how happy are they whose case forms the contrast to that in this

parable! How happy, when divinely enlightened guides on divinely enlightened people! They together pursue way of life in safety, and at last arrive at heaven in peace. Let us humbly and importunately pray that that happiness may be ours. May the Lord deliver us from all error. May he dissipate our remaining darkness, by letting in a bright light into our souls. May he guide us with his counsel while we are here, and afterwards receive us to his glory, for Christ's sake. Amen!

LECTURE XXXI.

LUKE VI. 41-45.

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42. Either, how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye. 43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

THESE verses contain two parables—the parable of the mote and the beam, and the parable of the good tree and the corrupt tree. Each of these we shall consider in order.

First. *The parable of the mote and the beam.* This parable is supposed to have been founded on a similar Jewish proverb; our Lord frequently condescending to avail himself of such proverbs. The idea has been suggested that there may be an allusion to two different distempers in the eye—the one very slight, and the other very severe; the former being to the latter but as a mote to a beam. There is probably, however, no sufficient reason to depart so far from the usual opinion. A “*mote*,” or, as it might have been rendered, a splinter, or very small chip, is here contrasted with a “*beam*,” or large piece of wood. It is quite plain, in the literal sense, that if a man, who had some large substance almost blinding his own eye, should desire his neighbour to hold still, till he extracted some very small substance, which had got into his, the former would render himself ridiculous. He must get clear of what was darkening his own vision, before he could reasonably pretend to perform such an operation on another. As applied figuratively, this parable is admirably calculated to check the officiousness of those who are forward to condemn or reprove others for comparatively small offences, when they themselves are guilty of what is more blamable. But let us amplify the parable in some illustrative observations.

It may be observed, then, that *this parable implies that there are different degrees of sin.* Some sins may be compared to a mote, and others to a beam. Not that any sin is trifling; for every sin is committed against the great God, and exposes to endless misery. But some sins are more heinous than others, either in themselves, or by reason of aggravating circumstances.

Sins are comparatively with each other, a mote, or a beam—a gnat, or a camel. Some have what, according to this rule of comparison, is a slight degree of criminality, and others a high degree; and there are sins of all the intermediate shades of guilt. Now, though no man ought to rest till he obtain absolute deliverance from condemnation, or to aim at anything short of the destruction of the very being of sin; yet, the recollection of the gradation in question is important, as it presents, when properly considered, a barrier to the unrestrained indulgence of iniquity. Some shall be beaten with few, and others with many, stripes. Hold, then, thou transgressor! If we cannot prevail on thee to turn and live, let us at least prevail on thee not so resolutely to force thy way to perdition, not so wilfully to accelerate and aggravate thy coming doom. It will be bad enough if thou perish at all; why shouldst thou seek to render it peculiarly intolerable for thee in the day of judgment?

Again, *our own sins often are really very great in themselves; and they would appear so to us, did we properly consider every thing with which we are acquainted in our own case.* We have much reason to cry out, "Unclean:" much reason to say, "Our sins are gone over our head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for us;" much reason to confess ourselves the chief of sinners; for, what human being can know, so fully as ourselves, all the advantages we have enjoyed, all the feelings of which we have been the subjects, all the secret wickedness of our hearts; in a word, all the aggravations of our sins?

We are here reminded, however, that many may be said to have even beams in their eyes; that is, to have very great faults, to be *great offenders, and yet are insensible of it.* It is of the nature of sin to darken the understanding and to harden the heart, especially as to the right perception and feeling of one's own case. Men are ready to think that they are "rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

And yet further, men are generally most *ready to mark the sins of others, when they are insensible of their own.* No doubt, some men sin with a high hand, so that their sins go before them to judgment, and are so manifest that they cannot escape observation: but there is a quick-sightedness to the faults of others, accompanied with an eagerness to lay hold of them, which is far from being amiable or Christian. Sometimes this readiness to mark and to condemn the faults of others has been dexterously turned to good account, in the way of leading men to judge of a case, similar in principle to their own, while they supposed that it referred to another person, and then to find that they had been condemning themselves. Thus, in the parable of the ewe-lamb: "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man: and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this shall surely die." "And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man." And David said, "I have sinned

against the Lord." It would be well for us, my friends, occasionally to submit our actions to this test; that is, to suppose them to be the actions of another, and on that supposition, to form as impartial an opinion of them as we can. We should then have only to change the person, and the opinion would immediately apply to ourselves.

We may, observe, again, from this character, that *to be severe on the sins of others, and to be indulgent to one's own, is very hypocritical.* "*Thou hypocrite.*" It is not uncommon for men to pronounce strong sentences of condemnation on others, and to seek and to admit of no excuse for their faults, while they indulge equal, or greater sins, themselves, and are ingenious in defending or extenuating them. This is hypocritical, as it is, in the former case, to profess a high displeasure at sin, and in the latter, plainly to show that the profession is false. Thus, in the parable, the Pharisee thanked God that he was not like other men who were great sinners, or like the publican; and thus many of the scribes and Pharisees accused Christ, without ground, of violating the Sabbath, while they themselves were plotting his murder, and characterized by hypocrisy and many other crimes. As to those who condemn others for sins of which they are really guilty, and do the same things themselves, the apostle thus reprimands them sharply, and declares them to be inexcusable, in the 2d chapter to the Romans: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."—"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"—"Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"

These remarks pave the way for the chief lesson taught in this parable, namely, that *in order to be prepared for the office of a reformer, a man must be reformed himself.* Unto the wicked God saith: "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" The Lord does not encourage the wicked to suppose that he will honour them as the instruments of reforming others: but, "if a man purge himself" from his own sins, "he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." This principle applies, not only to ministers, but to private individuals. It is surely abundantly evident that those who have not the light, and hope, and holiness of the gospel, are very unfit instruments for imparting these blessings to others. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off." Men will surely make use of the proverb:

“Physician, heal thyself.” Those who would enlighten others, must first anoint their own eyes with eye-salve that they may see. In short, well does our Lord here exhort: “*Cast first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.*”

This leads us to observe, that, though this parable discourages hasty and hypocritical reproof and interference on the part of those who have no true religion, *it teaches us that it is the duty of those who are reformed to try to reform others.* When the beam is removed from our own eye, then we ought to proceed to offer to pull out the mote from our brother’s. And, it may be observed, that some remaining degree of perceptible imperfection does not incapacitate a man for the office of a reprover and teacher, nor justify others in despising and rejecting his assistance; for, if men were to wait till themselves were perfect, they would never attempt anything for the glory of God and the spiritual good of their fellow-creatures. One branch of this duty, in this order, is inculcated in the words of our Lord to Peter: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren:” and another branch of it may be inferred from the words of David: “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

Let the lesson here read against censoriousness be particularly and conscientiously attended to by us all. Though this evil is not confined to them, perhaps it is most common among those who have a profession of religion. It is almost universal where there is the profession without the reality. It often prevails, too, in some degree, in those who, in the main, have a better spirit in them; and it ought to be carefully guarded against by them, in every degree. Perhaps we ought to lay an emphasis on the word “*brother,*” which is thrice introduced into this parable, and consider it as furnishing an argument to attend to the kind and considerate conduct enjoined. Men do not usually show themselves uncharitable and harsh to their brethren or very near relations. So, we are here taught to treat all men with the kindness of brethren, while we ought especially to be tender of the reputation and feelings of those who are our brethren in Christ. Indeed, those who would discharge the office of reprovers with any propriety or success, must always be careful to proceed with deep humility and with great meekness. “Brethren,” says the apostle to the Galatians: “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

But let us proceed to notice the other parable, namely, the parable of the good tree and the corrupt tree. “*For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes.*”

These are universally acknowledged facts in the history of nature, that a fruit tree is most certainly known by its fruit, and that a tree of one species does not produce the fruit of another. I am not aware that any illustration can make the literal sense of this parable more plain. Figuratively interpreted, the tree is the man himself, and the fruits are his actions. If a man be a good man, his actions will be good. It is true, that, as there may be some blighted fruit on a good tree, so there may be some of the actions of a good man not what they should be ; but on the whole, they will be good. On the contrary, if a man be a bad man, his actions will be bad likewise. There may be the leaves and the blossoms of profession ; but there will be no fruit, at least no good fruit. Of those who are themselves evil, it is said that "their vine is of the vine of Sodom, their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter." Their virtues are counterfeit ; and they can only shine in borrowed and fictitious colours. Their best works may be compared to artificial figs stuck upon thorns, or a bunch of artificial grapes hung on a bramble-bush ;* they have neither life nor growth. But our Lord himself gives us, in the 45th verse, this excellent spiritual application of the parable, on which we shall dwell at some length : "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil ; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*"

He is a good man, and, He has a good heart, are sayings of very frequent occurrence ; but how inadequate, and even how erroneous, are the ideas which many entertain of goodness ! In worldly society, a man acquires the denomination of good, who has a constitutional frankness and openness of character, joined with a readiness to part with his money. Though a stranger to the fear of God, and regardless of the moral purity of his neighbours, still, in such society, he is esteemed a good man. Some pass for good men from their observance of the mere forms of religion, while they are hypocrites, and naught in the sight of God. Others are inattentive to religious duties, and nevertheless, because of their schemes of usefulness to society, are reckoned among the best of men. From a similar destructive error it is, that while a man is living in the direct and open violation of some of the plainest precepts of the moral law, it is by no means uncommon to hear it said of him : "He is really a good-hearted man ;—he is an enemy to nobody but himself." But whatever ideas on this subject may pass current elsewhere, assembled as we are in the temple of the living God, in the name of the Holy One and the Just, and with the professed desire of following out the truth, no goodness is worth contending for but that which is demonstrably scriptural, which God himself approves, and of which all who are now in possession shall, in the great day, be thus addressed : "Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It is true that there is no absolutely perfect goodness: in that sense, "there is none good but one—that is, God." But in every one who is entitled to be called a good man in the sense of this parable, certain important characteristics are invariably to be found. Let us mark some of these for our own edification.

Of every man, then, who is a good man, and who has a good heart, it may be said that *he is a new man, and has a new heart*. Let it be remembered that it is not superficial, but real goodness, of which we are in search. Now, while it might be demonstrated, that the radical reformation which the gospel effects is the only certain way of producing outward obedience to God's commandments, and that wherever the inward dispositions are right, the obvious effects will correspond in excellence; it is more appropriate here to remark, that there may be the appearance of what is good, without its reality, and for this evident reason, that the external appearance is not always the genuine index of the heart. Many causes contribute to keep within certain bounds of decency those who are not renewed. Human laws, the polish of civilisation, the customs of society, a regard to reputation, the restraining power of God, and the like, all contribute to conceal the natural turpitude of the human heart. Let but these restraints be removed, and it will soon be seen what human nature is. These restraints set limits to the actual workings of depravity; but unrenewed men are still evil men. Nothing can make them good men, nothing can give them a good heart, but the regenerating grace of God. Newness of heart alone is goodness of heart: where this is wanting, every thing else is essentially defective. Would an earthly parent be pleased with the feigned submission of a child who, he knew, hated him at the heart? Surely not. How, then, can it be supposed that the Father of all will look with pleasure on those actions which are the result of a mind still carnal, and at enmity with himself? Here was a difficulty which the power of man could never remove. He has often gone the dull round of tedious and painful observances, and all in vain, for he has still found his heart averse from good. Blessed constitution of the gospel, which provides for a complete renovation of our powers! Thanks be to God who, by his Holy Spirit, brings men's hearts into captivity, gives them holy affections, and causes them to delight in his law after the inward man! Others may plume themselves in fancied virtues, and seek to shine as whited sepulchres, while they deride, or overlook, the doctrine of regeneration; but be it our most importunate desire that God would create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. Thus, a man becomes a good man, when he becomes a new man; and then that "good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good."

Again: let it be granted that by a good man we are here to

understand one whom God reckons good, one whom he accepts, one with whom he is well pleased, and there will be no difficulty in proving that a good man must be *a believer*. "Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is"—not merely that a God exists, but that he exists, and is such a God as he is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. "Ye believe in God," said our Lord, "believe also in me." Those who have no faith are evil, because they are still in their natural state of guilt. Their sins are still unpardoned; and no services of theirs, while they are in that state, can be accepted. But faith is the means of a man's becoming a good man, because it unites him to Christ, and thereby brings both pardon and purifying energy into his soul. This faith purifies the heart, works by love, overcomes the world, and produces a truly excellent character—a character at once pleasing to God, and beneficial to man. What, then, are we to think of that boasted excellence of character which some have ascribed to certain men who have openly declared themselves on the side of infidelity? We fear many of their virtues were imaginary; but allowing all that can possibly be asked, we are sure they were chargeable with what rendered every trait in their character unfit for the approving eye of God. So far from being entitled to be called good, in relation either to God or man, they offered the grossest insult to their Maker, in despising the most precious of all his gifts; and, with all their pretensions to philanthropy, they were the greatest of all enemies to the peace, the happiness, the virtue, and the real good of society. And what is to be said of those who, though they make a general profession of Christianity, do not actually believe the gospel in its true meaning, and have not that faith which produces real dependence on the Saviour? They are all in a state of condemnation, and in many respects actual slaves to sin. We know that some make little account of faith, and are for resting a man's character for goodness solely on the life he leads: but, though it is true that a really good life is an infallible criterion of a good man, we also know that there are many counterfeits, that it is by no means among those who undervalue the importance of the belief of the truth that we are to look for the most exemplary conduct; and we also know that, however fair any man's deportment may be, the acceptance of his person and works can only come through the medium of faith. Would we, then, have a good heart?—let us believe the gospel. Would we produce any good fruit?—let us seek to be ingrafted into Christ. Would we bring forth more good fruit?—let us pray, "Lord, increase our faith."

Further; every good man is conscientiously attentive to the duties of *piety and morality*. By piety we understand those dispositions and exercises which relate more immediately to God. Among these dispositions the chief are, fear, whereby men are filled with filial reverence for God, and are afraid to offend him;

gratitude, whereby they entertain a lively sense of the inestimable blessings he confers on them; love, whereby they delight in him as the most excellent of beings; trust, whereby they rely firmly on his promises; and submission, whereby they yield themselves willingly to all his determinations. Necessarily connected with these dispositions, are an outward respect for the name and ordinances of God, and a regular observance of religious institutions. This is piety. And that no man is a good man who is not thus pious, is demonstrable. It cannot be denied that it is the part of a good man to admire and follow what is good. Here, then, is an object, namely, God, in comparison of whom all other goodness is as nothing—for whom, however, many have no regard. The conclusion is plain. Go, thou profane swearer, thou Sabbath-breaker, thou neglecter of ordinances, thou stranger to true prayer, thou who hast no delight in the Lord, and whose breast glows not with divine love—go and suffer thy conscience but for a moment to speak, and it will tell thee thou art not a good man. Boast not of thy honour, or of thy benevolence. Where is thy honour, when thou defraudest the best of Beings of his due? where is thy benevolence, when by thy example, if not direct endeavour, thou art contributing so lamentably to check the progress of those principles which tend more powerfully than anything else, both in a temporal and spiritual sense, to soothe the sorrows, and to secure the happiness of thy fellow-creatures.

Attention to the duties of morality is also essential to the character of a good man. Among these duties are to be ranked such as integrity, purity, and temperance. Morality is plainly agreeable to right reason; it is the direct consequence of right principle; and it is expressly enjoined in the Word of God: it is, therefore, of great importance, to have its necessity impressed on the mind. Here there must be struck out of the list of good men all who are wilfully guilty of any kind of *injustice or fraud*. “Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt do no unrighteousness.”—“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?”—“All that do such things, and all that do unrighteousness, are an abomination to the Lord thy God.” Equally plain is the wickedness of the votaries of *impurity*. Let a man be adorned with all the accomplishments of nature and education, and distinguished as much as may be for frankness and generosity; is it possible that he can be a good man, when he sets this plain prohibition of the divine law at defiance, and scruples not to entail misery and infamy on others? On this point the Scriptures are remarkably explicit: and it was fit that they should be so. “Fornication and uncleanness, let it not be once named among you;”—“neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.”—“For this ye know, that no whoremonger nor unclean person,” “hath any inherit-

ance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Our Lord here teaches us that a man's state is also evidenced by his *conversation*: "For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." Daringly ungodly sinners are known by their hard speeches, which they speak against God; and men of the world are known by speaking only of the world. The people of God are known by their abstaining from all improper language, by their adherence to truth, and by studying to let that "proceed out of their mouth which is good for the use of edifying." "In this way, you may know what is in the heart (remarks Henry), as you may know what is in the vessel, water or wine, by what is drawn out from it."

As the word "good" sometimes signifies benevolent—for example, in the passage, "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die"—we must remark, that every good man is truly *benevolent*. His benevolence, is manifested in deeds of almsgiving, according to his ability. It includes also sympathy, charitable judging, gentleness, and forgiveness. Let it be remembered, also, that there are two great objects of Christian benevolence, the body and the soul; and that both of these are necessary to be attended to. Is there a man forward to contribute to religious institutions, while he does nothing to relieve the immediately pressing bodily wants of the poor?—there is reason to fear that his conduct is influenced, not by true religious principle, but by hypocrisy. In like manner, is there a man who is alive to temporal projects of benevolence, but who takes no interest in those which are spiritual?—there is reason to fear that, generally speaking, his views are confined to this world; in other words, that he has no religion. Hold it, therefore, as a settled point, that in both these ways, the good man is benevolent.

We shall only further observe, that the truly good man is always characterized by *humility*. Humility is not a man's entertaining a worse opinion of himself than is consistent with truth, nor is it incompatible with a consciousness of general integrity; but it is a man's sense of his utter demerit in the sight of God, of the complete unworthiness even of his best services in themselves. Were a man possessed of many good qualities, pride would mar them all. "God resisteth the proud," and "every one who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." On the other hand, humility, like a robe of modesty, adorns every good quality. God "giveth grace to the humble," and looks with complacency to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit. To be humble, is expressly declared to be good, in the well-known passage, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Humility increases in proportion to a man's real goodness. The fewer

sins he has, the more heinous they appear in his sight, because his conscience is proportionably more tender. The more lively his graces are, the more is he humbled under a sense of his complete dependence on God. This humility runs through every part of his character. Is he inwardly renewed?—this makes him sensible of the law in his members warring against the law in his mind. Is he a believer?—it is his prayer, “Lord, help mine unbelief?” Is he pious?—the very existence of the principle of piety shows him how far he is from loving God with all his heart. Is he moral?—a single failure is enough to fill him with distress; nor is it necessary for this that he publicly offend, for he knows how he is called on to mourn for the secret sins of his heart. Is he, on the whole, attentive to his conversation?—he knows that “in the multitude of his words there wanteth not sin.” Is he benevolent?—his regret when he thinks of the good he *might* have done, prevents him from being elated with what he *has* done. Is he humble?—he is humbled for want of humility. He does not rest his hope on his good qualities. We hear nothing from the good man himself of his goodness; nothing from him of his being able to look back on his past life without regret; nothing from him, on his death-bed, of a hope of future happiness on account of his inoffensiveness, or usefulness in the world—nothing even of a partial trust in the Saviour to supply that in which he himself has been deficient. No, He is indeed a good man, else there would be no room for his humility; but the prime part of his goodness is, that he renounces all trust in it. He does not seek to share the honour of his salvation, for he knows that all he can justly call his own is sin. He looks for salvation through grace, and through grace alone. He ends where he began, in a simple dependence on the mercy of God, in the appointed way of faith in the atonement. Thus it is that the name of Jesus sounds so sweet to the departing good man. Thus it is that, in waiting on the last moments of the good, we witness that display of mixed feeling, which those who do not understand the gospel cannot well comprehend, but which is quite consistent, and very impressive and delightful:—we hear the excellent of the earth speaking with deep humility of the greatness of their sinfulness, and soon after, upborne on the wings of faith, and love, and joy, thanking their God, and ascribing praise unto Him who hath loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood.

Such, dear friends, are some of the characteristics of the truly good man: and it remains that you should consider whether they are to be found in you. It matters not how great deference others may pay to your character, or how many and how flattering compliments they may bestow on you: all things are naked and open to Him with whom you have to do; and there is therefore, in order to your being happy hereafter, an absolute necessity for genuine evangelical goodness of state, of heart, and of conduct.

With regard to you whose fruits are evil, and who are yourselves evil, we know not what we can do but place (as we are now endeavouring to place) the nature of your situation before you, as plainly as possible, together with the way of escape; hoping and praying that God may graciously open your eyes before it be too late. Ah, my friends, it is not a trifle which we are now agitating. It will be a fearful thing if you fall, while in sin, into the hands of the living God: but it will be unspeakably glorious, if you obtain salvation. The alternative is that of hell, or heaven—an eternity of bliss, or an eternity of misery: and will you not listen? will you not regard? will you not be at the pains to think of the matter? Do dwell steadily on the consideration of your state, till the arrows of conviction stick so fast in your hearts, that no hand can pull them out, but that which is divine. Put not aside the word. Welcome the truth, however humiliating, however alarming. Think of eternity. Look to the Saviour. Cry to the Lord, and he will deliver you.

You who know what religion, what true goodness is, will be painfully sensible how far you come short of the divine standard. You will be ready to say: "Alas, for the sad defects in our disposition and character! The Lord forgive us, and grant us grace to be more pure and exemplary hereafter."—"Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life." Seek to abound more and more in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God. Many and powerful are the encouragements which the Word of God holds forth to the good man: "A good man shall be satisfied from himself."—"A good man obtaineth favour of the Lord."—"The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." His is a happy death: "Mark thou the perfect, and behold the upright man; for the latter end of that man is peace." His is a glorious resurrection: "They shall come forth, they who have done good to the resurrection of life." And his, at last, is the applauding sentence: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Can you think of all this, and not resolve to continue to make true goodness your chief pursuit? Now may the Lord fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; and to his name be praise! Amen.

LECTURE XXXII.

LUKE VI. 46-49.

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? 47. Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: 48. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. 49. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

OUR Lord, being now to bring this sermon to a close, takes care, with divine skill, to wind it up in a way admirably calculated to bring home the whole of it with deep conviction to the consciences of his hearers. He well knew how common it was for men to give some temporary attention to his instructions, without being permanently affected—to pay some marks of respect to his person, while they had no just idea of his character, and manifested no actual submission to his will—to satisfy themselves with some profession of religion, while neither their hearts nor lives were under its influence: and therefore, before dismissing his audience at this time, he addresses them in the most earnest and searching manner. In these concluding sentences, he shows a fine example, and illustrates the vast importance, of those discriminating applications of divine truth, without which hypocrites will be encouraged in their delusions, and sincere inquirers will be allowed to be unnecessarily perplexed, or to rest satisfied with a much lower standard of character than that to which they might otherwise be stimulated to attain. Always interesting, our Saviour now becomes deeply impressive: always faithful, he now becomes most awakening. His urgency, though still calm, is majestically earnest; and his last words are his weightiest.

Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

It is certain that Christ does not mean, in these words, to blame those who then heard him preach, or any other persons, for calling him Lord. He is indeed well entitled to the appellation. He is our Lord by divine right, as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. He is both Lord and Christ. He is "Lord of all;" He is the "Lord of glory"—the "Lord both of the dead and of the living." "He hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." He was commonly addressed as Lord, by the disciples, when he was on earth: and now "God hath highly exalted him, and given him

a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." David called him his Lord; Thomas addressed him, "My Lord, and my God;" and the dying malefactor besought him, in believing prayer, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." His own words to his disciples, as recorded in John xiii. 13, are especially to be noticed: "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am." Let no man, then, deceive himself so far as to imagine that the hypocrisy of others will be an excuse for his irreligion—that the false professions of some will justify his total refusal, or neglect to honour the Saviour. This is a most dangerous and groundless, though apparently a common, supposition. Sin of one kind can never render innocent sin of another kind. Two bad characters can never make a good one: nor can the assistance, or discovery of counterfeit coin, convert any other piece of base metal into precious.

But Christ here blames those who make a mere profession of regard to him, without acting accordingly. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In some, this iniquity rose to cruel insult and treachery, as when Judas, approaching to him, said: "Hail, Master," and kissed him, but soon after sold him, and betrayed him; and as when his murderers bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying: "Hail, king of the Jews!" In others, during Christ's personal abode on earth, this sin consisted rather in that acknowledgment of him which was merely verbal, and not sincere, nor influential on their heart and conduct, and which finds a parallel in very many at the present day. Let us consider who among ourselves may be viewed as justly exposed to this rebuke, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

There are exposed, then, to this rebuke, all *merely nominal Christians*. Those who have been baptized—who frequent the place of Christian worship, however often, or however rarely—who wish to be called Christians—who ever speak of Christ as their Lord, or Master, or Saviour, and who at all join in any Christian service, and any verbal ascriptions of praise to Christ, but who go no farther, who are not obedient in heart and life to his will—all such ought to consider themselves as thus expositulated with: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

But more particularly, there are here reprovèd all *unbelieving, self-righteous persons*, who bear the Christian name. There are who adopt the scriptural language in relation to the person and work of Christ, while yet they attach a totally different meaning to that language from what it is intended to convey, and therefore, do not receive him in the real character in which he is proposed as the object of their faith. It must not be forgotten that the commandments of Jesus Christ, as issued by himself

and his apostles, refer to the two grand branches of faith and practice, or to "what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." With regard to what our Lord says on the subject of faith, he expressly enjoins men to believe on him: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."—"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." The obedience of faith is even spoken of as the grand leading instance of obedience. In John vi. 28, we read that the people said unto Jesus: "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The same prominent place is given among the divine commandments to faith, when John says, in his First Epistle (iii. 23): "This is his" (that is, God's) "commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." Now, there were many at first, who, without any formal rejection of Christ, nay, with a certain acknowledgment of him, did not, however, believe in him, in the saving sense, did not actually credit the pure Gospel, did not receive him as the ground of their hope, but stumbled at the true doctrine of salvation through faith, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. Thus, after our Lord's declarations, in the 6th chapter of John, concerning coming to Christ, and believing on him, and concerning his being the bread of life, and the necessity of that believing reception of him illustrated by the figure of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, it is added: "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? But there are some of you that believe not."—"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." In like manner, all who still refuse to believe in the Son of God, all who have any trust in themselves, and who do not rely solely on his merits for acceptance, whatever pretensions they may make to a high regard for those precepts of his which relate to other duties, and whatever attention they may pay to the decencies of life—all such persons are sinfully neglecting the primary precept of the Gospel, and ought to consider themselves as thus addressed: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Again, this rebuke is still directed to all *unregenerated and immoral professors*. Does not Christ distinctly teach the necessity of an inward radical change in all his real disciples? Does he not here, in this sermon, teach the necessity of the tree being good, that the fruit may be good? and has he not elsewhere said: "Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also?" And are not these, too, his words: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" Whatever

men may profess, then, in point of doctrine, and whatever they may do in point of conduct, they are disobeying the will of Christ, they are not doing the things which he says, unless they be renewed in the spirit of their minds, unless they put off the old man, which is corrupt, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. But especially does our Lord here rebuke all who, with a profession of regard to him, are disobedient in their lives: whether their disobedience consist in gross acts of positive immorality, or in the neglect of those things which he has commanded. Right views and a right profession are requisite; but so also is a right conduct. There are, however, many with whose theoretical and avowed sentiments no fault can be found, who are yet wilfully disobedient, or negligent, in their life: and there are even some, who, with a higher profession than usual, while they are forward in expressions of regard for Christ, and say they are partakers of divine grace, are yet living in the neglect of various commanded duties, and are proud, or sensual, or covetous. They are like the second son in the parable, who said, "I go, sir, and went not." To all such, these words are peculiarly applicable. Alas, my friends, there are multitudes, who, however they may differ from each other in almost everything else, agree in making their various errors and corruptions subservient to their own delusive hope of safety, without real practical religion, nay, even though they are conscious of allowed and habitual disobedience. They make their unmeaning and unfelt declarations stand in the place of sincere devotion; and they make God's mercy an encouragement, not to turn to him that they may live, but to continue in the neglect of repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, on the one hand, some do profess to receive, but actually abuse, the doctrines of grace; while, on the other, many exclaim against the supposed immoral tendency of these doctrines, and yet, from their own lax views, both of doctrine and duty, fall into a state of real indifference and practical Antinomianism.

But of all such we would ask, Why is it so? Well may Christ ask of you, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Is this reasonable, or becoming? Surely not. That a man's professions and character should be at variance, that his actions should give the lie to his words, is a foolish and shameful thing, judging of it even on the principles of the world. Why is it so? Is it because obedience is not absolutely necessary? That you cannot warrantably suppose, when the contrary is, in Scripture, everywhere asserted. Why is it so with you? Is it because the thing required is unattainable? The Lord Jesus requires nothing but what he offers grace and strength to enable you to do. Why do you call Christ, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says? Is it because any nominal Christianity will suffice for that which is genuine? Think not so; for, "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor

uncircumcision," neither one mere form nor another, "availeth anything, but a new creature," and "faith which worketh by love," and "the keeping of the commandments of God."—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Why do you act thus foolishly? Is it because your hypocrisy will not be detected? If it be not known to your fellow-creatures already, it is at least well known to Him who will one day expose it before assembled worlds. Why is it so with you? Is it because your hope is solid? "What is the hope of the hypocrite though he have" now, in some sense, "gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him?"—"The hypocrite's hope shall perish: his hope shall be cut off, and his trust shall be a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure." Why do you call Christ, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says? Is it because you will not wish, at last, that you had obeyed him? You will sadly rue your obstinacy. Is it because there is any possibility of your admission into heaven without such obedience? Hear the words of the Son of God himself from the parallel passage in Matthew: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Is it because there will be any possibility of your escaping endless misery, if you remain disobedient? "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Why do you call Christ, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says? Is it because you will be able to bring forward any valid plea for acquittal, or even for arrest of judgment, in the great day? The mouth of every transgressor shall then be stopped, and you shall be speechless. "What will you say when he shall punish you?" He has himself, as a specimen of all the rest, anticipated and declared the futility of some of the most plausible pleas which can be imagined; and it is for you to attend to the warning he now thus gives you: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? Lord, Lord, open unto us. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets."—"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Ponder this question, you who are altogether hypocrites, or nominalists, or disobedient; ponder it well; for it is indeed a weighty and a cutting question. Apprehend the necessity of

really thinking what you say, and of doing as well as saying. Be obedient to the faith and to the various precepts of Christ. And in order to this, recollect the necessity of the aid of divine grace; for, though it be quite easy for the natural man to exclaim, in hypocrisy, Lord, Lord; in any acceptable and saving sense, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Ponder this question well, you too who are Christ's genuine disciples. Has he not some reason thus to complain even of you? Are you as devoted to him in spirit, as obedient to him in life, as is proper? Ah, my friends, be humbled and grieved, when you think how far you yet are from what you ought to be. How inconsistent! how sad! you to call Jesus, Lord, Lord; ay, and to have taken him for your Lord too, and yet, at times, not to do the things which he says! "Do ye thus requite the Lord? O foolish people, and unwise! is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?" The Church expects it of you, the world expects it of you, your own hearts expect it of you, your blessed Lord expects it of you, that you should do the things which he says. O let it be your study to obey him, your pleasure to serve him, your delight to honour him. Is he not indeed your Redeemer and Master, your Lord and your God? Let it, then, be the heartfelt and practically proved language of each of you: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant: thou hast loosed my bonds."

Having thus proposed this weighty and searching question, our Lord proceeds, in the remaining verses, more fully to discriminate the two great classes of hearers of the gospel—first, by a plain description; and secondly, by a figurative illustration. He discriminates them, first, by a *plain description*. The first, and the approved class, are described plainly in part of the 47th verse, as "coming to Christ," as "hearing his sayings," and as "doing them."

They are described as *coming to Christ*. Our Lord's true disciples, of whom he here more immediately spoke, had come to him in the most literal sense of the term. They had come to him bodily; they had resorted to the place where he was; they had approached to him; they had come into his immediate personal presence, to listen to his teaching. But they had also come to him in the spiritual sense, in the sense in which he speaks, when he says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"All that my Father hath given me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."—"He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me" (for so he explains the word cometh) "he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Now, this coming is absolutely necessary in every case of real discipleship. Till men have thus mentally come to Christ, in a sense

of their guilty and perishing condition, and in reliance on his merits, they have no part in him.—His approved disciples are also plainly described as *hearing his sayings*. They pay reverential and earnest attention. They, as it were, sit at his feet, desiring to be fully instructed in his good and holy will. Now that he is no longer to be heard personally speaking on earth, they listen to him speaking from his word. In attending on the reading and preaching of his Word, “they hearken diligently unto him, that they may eat that which is good, and that their soul may delight itself in fatness.”—“They incline their ear and come unto him; they hear that their souls may live.” And, moreover, they are described as not only hearing, but *doing* his sayings. They hear, in order that they may do. When he bids them believe in him, they believe: when he bids them imitate him, they imitate him: when he bids them attend to any of the duties of piety, or morality—any of the duties they owe to God, to their neighbour, or to themselves—they attend to them.

The other class, again, of hearers of the gospel, are plainly described, in the beginning of the 49th verse, as *hearing and not doing*. Some have thought that our Lord intentionally makes no mention of their coming to him. Certainly, even this class must have come to him, in the literal sense, else they could not have been described as hearers. They had not come to him, however, in a proper way; they had not come mentally. In reference to such coming, he would have been inclined to say to them: “Ye will not come to me that ye may have life.” And is it not here that many are still essentially deficient? They will not apply to him as knowing that, without him, they must perish. They carelessly give him the name of Saviour and Lord; but they will not submit to the humbling method of gospel grace. The persons immediately referred to in this passage did, indeed, hear Christ’s sayings; for how could they, when present, fail to hear what he said, unless they had actually stopped their ears? But, as to doing his sayings, they did them not. And so, there are still many who hear without doing. They hear, it may be, not only occasionally, but regularly; and yet they are, if not absolutely affected at the time, yet habitually careless, and they remain unconverted. Some even take a pleasure in hearing, and yet fail to obey the truth. Such hearers are well described in Ezekiel: “Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of their houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and

can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

We have, secondly, the character, and also the end, of both these classes of hearers, *figuratively illustrated*, by the comparison of two men building, each a house, near a river, and in an exposed situation, where floods and storms may be expected. And first, of him who belongs to the approved class of hearers, our Lord says: "*I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man who built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock.*" But, secondly, with regard to every one of the disobedient class, Christ says: "*He that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation,*" that is, without a proper foundation, without what deserves to be called a foundation, *built an house upon the earth,*" upon the very surface of the loose earth, "*against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.*" The correctness and force of this description of the wise and the foolish builder, must be quite obvious. Whoever will proceed with common judgment to erect a great building, must pay particular attention to the way in which he founds; and he must dig as deep as may be necessary for finding a proper foundation. In every case, this must be attended to in some degree; but, in some cases, more than ordinary attention is requisite; for, what may prove sufficient and permanent in one situation, may not prove so in another. For example, for a building exposed to be washed by the waves of the sea, or the flood of the river, a remarkably firm foundation is necessary: and for such nothing is so good as a rock. A house thus founded, and afterwards properly built, and finished, according to the rule and plumb, affords its owner a safe abode; and stands firm, even when tried by the most tempestuous weather. On the contrary, when, in such a situation, the builder is contented with the loose and shifting sand, or soft earth, or any other insufficient foundation: then whatever pains he may bestow on the superstructure, and however well it may look, the higher the house is built, the weaker and more dangerous it becomes; and if it do not fall soon, in good weather, and by its own weight, the washing of the water will gradually undermine it, and at last the flood and the storm will overthrow it. Thus, all the labour and expense laid out upon it will be lost. It will disappoint all the expectations of its owner; and perhaps bury him in its ruins.

The following observations may extract something of the spirit and practical instruction of this figurative illustration.

1. *We are here admonished of the duty, and vast importance, of what has been called building for eternity; that is, attending to the salvation of our souls.* Every one is building, labouring corporeally and materially, or speculating mentally, in one way or another. Some are engaged with great schemes; and some,

who have neither substance nor strength to expend on great works, are nevertheless as deeply engaged as those who have. How many, however, are building, as we may say, only for this world! Their schemes terminate here. But

“He builds too low, who builds beneath the skies.”

To have a hope for heaven, ought to be the great object with us all. This is the one thing needful. Men should think of this great concern, whatever be their employment, or rank in life; and whether they live in a stately house, or in a dwelling of penury. Think of this, you who have lately built, or are building, a house for yourselves; and see to it, that this work of which we are speaking, be done, or be going forward, as well as the other. Think of this, too, you who have no comfortable earthly dwelling, and be thankful that the materials for the erection of this spiritual house are as ready for you as for the greatest.

2. We are here taught that, as in common cases, so in proceeding to build this house for eternity, *every wise man will be careful* to found well—to found, as it is here expressed, on the rock. It is quite certain that there are many who are not altogether indifferent, nay, who feel considerable concern, and are at some pains, about religion, who nevertheless from inattention to what is here called the foundation—that is, to the principles on which they rest, and the way in which they commence—are proceeding in a work which will, sooner or later, appear foolish, and worse than useless. Some even proceed in religion so much at random, that they have never thought of any determinate principles; they cannot tell what their foundation is; in fact, they have no foundation at all:—they are, spiritually, building castles in the air. It is not so, however, with the wise builder: he is not so easily satisfied. And, as in the literal case of a building, so in the spiritual case under consideration, two things are necessary to be attended to in laying the foundation; the one is, that the builder know what is a sufficient foundation; and the other is, that he do actually cause his building to rest upon it. If he be mistaken in his idea as to what is a proper foundation, or, if he fail to found on it, by not digging deep enough to reach it, or by erroneously founding only near it; in either case he commits a fatal error. So in religion, we must both judge correctly as to what the true foundation is, and must take care that we be really upon it. As to what can be strictly called the foundation of hope, or that on which we should rest for pardon and acceptance;—the foundation, in that sense, is, unquestionably, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the rock on which the Church is built. “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation:” and, in reference to the security of those who build on this foundation, the Lord adds: “He that believeth, shall not make haste.”

But, to show the insufficiency of all other foundations, it is subjoined, in language not unlike the comparison before us: "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." And, as the apostle writes to the Corinthians: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—"He is our hope." This is a point which must be clearly understood, and fully admitted. It is not enough for us, however, that this is a fact in itself, that Jesus is a sure foundation of hope, to those who build on him; we must so follow up this fact as really to rest on him ourselves. God has laid the foundation, and we must build upon it. A Saviour is offered, and we must accept him. And we must rest solely on him; for, it is plain that it would not do to have one end of a house founded on a rock, and the other end, which was equally exposed, founded on the quicksand. Think well, then, of this point. Do you not only admit Christ to be the only foundation; but are you really resting on him? "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith." See that you do actually rely on him for grace and glory. Have him as the support and confidence of your souls, as the basis of your whole plan. It is of great importance to attend to the actual state of your minds, and the result of your opinions, as well as to your theory and professed opinions themselves. Indeed, the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ as the ground of hope, though necessarily connected with it, is not what this passage leads us chiefly to dwell upon; for, our Lord is directly speaking, not of the avowed unbeliever, or of the openly self-righteous man, or of him who holds an erroneous theory, but of the hypocritical professor of faith; and that such a man is off the true foundation, he shows from his inconstancy and disobedience.

3. *The wise do not neglect the superstructure because they have a good foundation.* This is plain in common life. None but the most foolish builder would dream of saying: "Now this is a firm foundation, and I have laid the ground-work well upon it. I have therefore nothing more to do." In fact, the consciousness of the wise builder that he has a good foundation and has begun well, gives him encouragement to proceed in the work, at once with confidence and with care. So ought it to be as to the building for eternity. It is well if men have begun to build on the true foundation; but let them not then sit down in indolence: still less let them make bad work. Have they begun on the foundation laid in Zion? "let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."—"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be

saved, yet so as by fire." Let all, then, who trust in Christ, proceed in the cultivation of all the duties of piety, temperance, and benevolence.

4. *In the time of trial, the hope of the true Christian, like the house of the wise builder, will stand; while the hope of the hypocrite and the formalist, like the house of the foolish builder, will be overthrown.* Trials of various kinds may be expected by both classes; but then, the temptations of Satan and of the world will be, in the main, resisted by the former, while they will be too powerful for the latter. Especially will death and judgment prove the solidity or the weakness of the respective buildings. When the great day of wrath is come, then it will be seen who shall be able to stand. God will set his own people's feet on a rock, and will establish their goings. But as for those who live and die in formality and disobedience, their towering hopes will be laid low, and miserable will be their disappointment and their fall. How striking Job's description of the vanity of the sinner's or foolish builder's hope! "He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and, as a storm, hurleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

This, then, my friends, is the substance of the whole. You all, in some sense, call Christ, Lord; but are you doing the things which he says? You all profess to be building for eternity; but are you building on the right foundation, and in the right way? Beware, not only of self-righteousness, but also of a dead faith, and of the perversion of the grace of God. That man cannot be on the true foundation who hears and practises not: he is as certainly on a sandy foundation, as the man who directly opposes the Gospel in words. Remember that the time of trial is coming. The weather may be fair now, but it will soon begin to lower. Now is the time to lay a good foundation against the day to come. Value highly such awakening passages as this; and love the most searching discourses. Have a simple dependence on the rock, Christ; and show that you are building on that rock, by the steady superstructure of a holy life. Thus, while more showy buildings shall fall, yours shall stand firm; and at last you shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it! Already, however, it is rising in symmetry, and it is polished after the similitude of a palace; while in its front is seen a beautiful vista that opens into eternity.

LECTURE XXXIII.

LUKE VII. 1-10.

“ Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue, 6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: 7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.”

AFTER our Lord had preached the long and interesting sermon of which we have an account in the preceding chapter, he returned, and “ *entered into Capernaum.*” Capernaum had now become the usual place of his residence; for we read, in Matt. iv. 13, that “ leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast,” that is, on the sea, or lake, of Gennesareth, or Galilee, “ in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim;” and he went thither, that Isaiah's prophecy might be fulfilled, respecting the transmission of gospel light to that benighted country. Capernaum enjoyed great advantages in the residence, and consequent instructions and miracles, of the Saviour, but failed to improve them: and this led him to say that it was “ exalted to heaven,” in point of privileges, namely, but “ cast down to hell,” because of the abuse of those privileges. Melancholy, however, as was the general state of religion in this town, a few things are recorded of it of a very pleasing nature: one of these is the account of this worthy centurion and his sick servant. Judea and the adjacent country, being now under the Roman yoke, bands of Roman soldiers, more or less numerous, were stationed in various places, to keep the vanquished people in subjection: and it appears that at this time there was stationed at Capernaum a band of soldiers, to which the “ *centurion*” here mentioned belonged. The word “ centurion,” signifies a commander of an hundred men; and the rank of a centurion corresponded most nearly with the rank of captain in our army.

The unsettled and varied life of a soldier unquestionably subjects him to many disadvantages in reference to religion, and exposes him to many temptations to forgetfulness of God, and even to absolute profligacy. Let no soldier, however, so misunderstand this remark, as to imagine that it furnishes any justification of impiety in those who follow the military profession. If evil were not in the heart of a man before he becomes a soldier, no temptations could ever draw it out. The circumstances in which he is placed may give scope to the indulgence of his evil propensities, but they do not implant them; they may manifest the depravity of his mind, but they do not create it. Whatever palliation of his crimes his situation may furnish, it cannot justify them. God does not lay down one rule of duty to the civilian, and another to the soldier. There is no military road to heaven. There is but one way to the Father. If the soldier neglect that way, he cannot be saved. If he believe not, he shall be condemned. Of the soldier, as well as of every other sinner, it will be found to hold true, that except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; except he repent, he shall perish: if he live after the flesh, he shall die. Let all who follow, or have followed, that profession, think of this. Let them not deceive themselves with the vain thought that they shall have peace and safety, though they walk in the evil way of their own hearts. But let them abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes; let them believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and let them learn to serve him by a sober, righteous, and godly life.

It is at once pleasant and encouraging to reflect that, in this profession, there have been not a few who have feared God, and been faithful soldiers under the Captain of salvation — who fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life. Of this, the centurion, mentioned in the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is an illustrious example. “There was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.” To him the angel of the Lord said: “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God;” and to him Peter was sent, to instruct him fully in the knowledge of the gospel. Like Cornelius, the person mentioned in this passage, though a Gentile, and a soldier, was a pious man. His piety, no doubt, added to his true courage, while it secured his fidelity. And that his piety did not detract from his respectability, or render those who were under him less submissive, is plain from the way in which he expresses himself of the readiness with which his orders were obeyed. It seems probable that he was, though perhaps not professedly, yet virtually, what was called a proselyte of the gate; that is, was a worshipper of the true God, and an observer of the moral precepts of the moral law, though he did not observe the cere-

monies of the Mosaic law : and there is every reason to believe that whatever was at first wanting to the safety and spirituality of his state, was afterwards supplied. The traits left of his character are truly interesting and instructive. Let us consider them, somewhat particularly, together with the gracious conduct of our Saviour towards him and his servant.

We are told that he had "*a servant who was dear unto him ;*" or, who was highly valued* by him, or precious to him.—It is much to be regretted that the reciprocal feelings of master and servant should so often be the very reverse of those which existed in this case. Too often is there cherished, and expressed, by them, a mutual spirit of indifference, and even of contempt and defiance. These things ought not so to be. In such cases, there is utterly a fault, and that commonly on both sides. It would be well if, living under the influence of the doctrines of the Gospel, masters and servants would conscientiously and practically observe the duties it prescribes to them respectively ; for thus their mutual attachment would be excited and cherished, and the prosperity and happiness of both promoted. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ : not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men ; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."—"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things ; not answering again ; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity ; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."—"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." On the other hand, let masters, and all who have persons under them, pay conscientious and practical attention to these truly Christian, reasonable, and humane precepts : "Thou shalt not rule over" thy servant "with rigour, but shalt fear the Lord."—"And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening : knowing that your Master also is in heaven ; neither is there respect of persons with him."—"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." When these relative duties are neglected, nothing can be expected but hatred and strife : when they are attended to, a mutual attachment will generally be the result. To appeal to reason and good feeling ; when servants find themselves thus well used, and kindly dealt with, and attended to, both temporally and spiritually, ought they not to be sensible of it, and to take a lively interest in those under whose roof, or in whose employ-

* *τιμιος*.

ment, they live? And to this dutiful and attached spirit and conduct, ought it not to be a most powerful motive with all truly religious servants, that thus, according to the passage just quoted, they “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour?” On the other hand, when servants are faithful, useful, and attached; when they cheerfully spend their time and strength in a man’s service, and make it the study, the care, the business of their life, to consult his interest and happiness: are they not well entitled to high esteem, and to much encouragement; and is it not ungenerous to withhold these from them? It may, indeed, be objected to this, that servants cannot bear encouragement, but when they meet with peculiar marks of it, forget themselves, and presume, so as to become unpleasant, both to their fellow-servants and to their employers. If there be some truth in this, as there probably is, then this suggests a lesson to conscientious servants, to be on their guard against such an improper spirit, to be careful not to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to study a carriage of respect and humility. And if there be some truth in this, it is a lesson to masters also to be judicious, though kind, and to keep their own place. But, to impute the faults of a few to the whole of so numerous a class, is rash and unjust. Ye proud and supercilious lordlings, who delight in acting the petty tyrant, who magnify every trifling inadvertence into a premeditated and unpardonable offence, who carry it so high as to intimate that they are unworthy to come before you, or to look up in your mighty presence, and who proceed on the principle that they are capable of being properly ruled only by terror!—your servants, because they are servants, have not therefore ceased to be human beings. They may have their faults (must it be supposed that you have none?) and some of them may be so unprincipled and perverse, as not to be won even by the kindest treatment: but among them are also to be found whatever is amiable in unregenerated human nature, and whatever characterizes the subjects of saving grace. Whatever may be the exceptions, the rule undoubtedly is, that the tendency and the effect of rational, scriptural, and kind treatment, is to make faithful and attached servants; while such dispositions and conduct on both sides, mutually cherish and confirm each other.

We have a beautiful example of this in the case of this officer and his servant. An opportunity for the peculiar display of the centurion’s regard presented itself, when his servant, who was highly esteemed by him, “*was sick and ready to die.*” In the parallel passage of Matthew, 8th chapter, and 6th verse, we are told what the disease was:—the man was “lying at home, sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.” The stroke had disabled him, and yet left him in great pain; so that his case was exceedingly distressing. And what ought to be the conduct of masters, when those who have served them long and faithfully are disabled by age, or disease? Not surely to desert them in

the time of their helplessness and sorrow: not surely to abandon those to whose careful ministration they may have themselves been indebted in the hour of their own distress. Let no man say that their services are sufficiently remunerated, that all that is due to them is discharged, when their wages for the time are paid. A defined sum of money may repay that service which is defined, and which the law can then compel; but there is a kind of service, there is a hearty, long-continued, affectionate service, which the stipulated wages cannot secure, and which the stipulated wages do not recompense. In addition to the common claim of humanity, there are the claims of long connection, and even of gratitude, which ought to call forth the kind care of masters, when such servants are laid aside by disease or age. May not the master suppose that he hears the servant, who has been disabled in his service crying to him, as the Psalmist did to his God, "Cast me not away in the time of age: forsake me not when my strength faileth." There are different ways in which such kindness may be shown; and what is suitable in one case may not apply in another: but surely the general principle must commend itself not only to every Christian, but to every humane mind.

The conduct of the centurion, on this occasion, was highly judicious and commendable; for he adopted the very best means to procure relief for his afflicted servant. "*When he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.*" On comparing the account of this affair given by Matthew, you will observe that he says, that the centurion "came to Christ beseeching him;" whereas Luke says that the centurion sent the elders, beseeching him. But you know that it is quite common to say that men do what they do by those whom they employ. It is clear from Luke, that messengers were sent to Christ, first the elders, and then friends of the centurion: and yet it is clear from Matthew, that when the centurion was aware that Jesus was near his house, he at last went out to meet him himself. What degree of light the centurion had into the character of Christ, may be doubtful: but it is implied in this application, that he had confidence in Christ's ability and readiness to work miracles of healing. Indeed, the cure of the nobleman's son in Capernaum, mentioned in the 4th chapter of John, is believed to have taken place before this time, and must be supposed to have had an influence in directing the centurion to the step now taken. He probably thought it more respectful to send the Jewish elders to Christ than it would have been to have gone himself: and he may have supposed that the elders being of the same nation with Christ, would be more certain of succeeding in the application. It is pleasing, also, to observe, that he, though a foreigner, was on so good terms with these Jewish elders, that they readily undertook this service. We mark in this, the effect of piety, prudence, and good offices, in doing away national and unfounded religious prejudices.

And to whom, in cases of the affliction of servants and domestics, can Christian heads of families chiefly apply, but to the great Physician? While they assist towards their obtaining the advice of human physicians, they should apply, by prayer, to the Lord of life, that he would be pleased, now that miracles have ceased, to direct and bless in the use of ordinary means, and restore the patients to health. And they should by no means neglect to apply, with them, and for them, to the Lord Jesus Christ, for spiritual healing, that he would be pleased to enlighten, and save their souls, and give them the sanctified use of their troubles. Let this be carefully remembered. Common humanity dictates attention to the bodies of the sick; but besides this, Christianity dictates attention to their souls. The time of sickness is well known to be a peculiarly favourable time for directing men's minds to the things which belong to their peace; and these endeavours to lead them to serious thought, and to the reception of the Gospel, are often blessed by the Spirit of God. When a man is "chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with sore pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat," and he draweth near to the grave: "if there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then God is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." Now, do not rest contented, my friends, with the general acknowledgment of the incumbency of this duty; but proceed immediately to put it in practice, wherever there is any call for it. Have you any member of your family lying sick at home? then, when you return home, think whether anything further can be done for his bodily health and comfort; and especially, see to it that you use all your endeavours to bring Christ to him. It may be well, too, that, with this view, you apply to friends and experienced persons, and avail yourselves of their intercession, influence, and exhortations. You will be aware what we mean by bringing Christ to the sick: he may be said, in the spiritual and most important sense, to be brought to them, when his character and work are placed distinctly before their mind, and when he is shown with his righteousness and all the blessings of his salvation, to be brought near to them by God in the Gospel, and pressed on their acceptance.

The elders whom the centurion employed on this kind errand, urged his suit with much earnestness, and with a cogent argument: "*When they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this.*" Whether these elders had correct views on the subject of human merit, may be doubted. We know, however, both that there is no such thing as a worthiness of merit to establish a claim of right for any man, and also, that while the Lord Jesus was ready to do good to all, even to the worst of men, he had a love of complacency in the righteous, and had a peculiar pleasure in attending

to their desires. The elders specify two things demonstrative of the excellence of the centurion. They say first, "*He loveth our nation.*" Though a Gentile, and a Roman, his views and impressions of religion were such, that he respected and loved the Jewish nation, who were the depositaries of the knowledge of the true God and of revelation, and who had been in many ways so highly favoured of the Lord. And what man of any piety does not still love the Jewish nation?—that nation "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen?" And what pious man would not still be happy to promote their spiritual welfare? The particular plan the centurion took would not, indeed, be suitable now: but should we not be ready to forward, by our prayers, and in as far as we can, by our contributions, those schemes which tend to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and to bring them home to our God and his Christ?

The love of this Roman officer to the Jewish nation was the more deserving of notice, as the Jewish nation was peculiarly disliked by the other nations of the world. The religion of the one true God, being diametrically opposed to all other religions, if religions they should be called; and the ceremonial customs of the Jews keeping them so distinct from the rest of the world; ancient history shows that they were absolutely hated, spoken against with the utmost virulence, and often treated with the greatest indignity and cruelty, by those of other nations. But, as for this worthy centurion, he loved the Jewish nation; and, in proof of his love, the elders add, secondly, "*He hath built us a synagogue;*" or, still more closely to the original, "He hath built the synagogue for us;" so that it is probable, there was only one synagogue in Capernaum. The meaning of this seems to be, that he was a man of fortune, and had built the synagogue at his own expense. Certainly, this was a remarkable instance of liberality of mind, and should be felt as a reproof by those who are so bigoted and contracted in their views, as to refuse to promote pious plans merely because they may relate chiefly to those with whom they may not be exactly agreed in every minute opinion. Certainly this was also a costly and most munificent act.

On this we may remark, that building places of Christian worship is still a good work—a work which is most beneficial to the community, and which, when a work of faith and a labour of true love, cannot but be most acceptable to God. Various splendid and complete examples of this occurred in former times, when wealth was more concentrated in the hands of a few: such efforts by individuals are now very rare. And indeed, though such deeds of beneficence and piety deservedly transmit the memory of their authors with honour to posterity, it is still a preferable state of things that property is now more diffused throughout

the community, and that what was wont to be done by the devotedness of one, may now be done, and is often done, by the united contributions of many. Spontaneous exertions in this way are plainly commendable: nor are those less acceptable to God, which, though in compliance with the law of the land, are yet made cheerfully, and from a principle of religion. Whatever may be the peculiarities of different cases, the general principle is plain, namely, that it is the bounden duty of a professing Christian community to do whatever may be necessary to provide sufficient and respectable accommodation for the worship of God, and the preaching of the gospel.

Our Lord immediately agreed to go with the elders, to heal the centurion's servant. When the centurion, however, understood that "*he was not far from the house, he sent friends unto him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.*" Mark, in this, the centurion's great *humility*. In truth he was a respectable, and a good man. He was, as the elders said, "worthy;" that is, he was a man of an excellent character. And yet he says of himself, also with truth, that he was "not worthy;" that is, he had nothing whereof to boast before God—he had no merit to entitle him to any favour from Christ. Nay, he was conscious of his own sinfulness; and when he thought of this, he felt and expressed himself altogether unworthy of such an honour, as that of having Christ in his house. In connection with this, we also mark his high veneration for the character and dignity of Jesus. Whatever he may have been ignorant of, he knew enough to convince him of our Lord's title to the highest respect and love. Something like this was the language of Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant;" and of David: "Who am I, O Lord? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" and of the Baptist: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;" and of the prodigal: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Such a feeling is, in all cases, most becoming. Surely, pride was never made for man, nor high looks for the sons of men. Yet poor, frail, sinful mortals, when somewhat raised above the generality of mortals around them, and when possessed of some property and some command, are ready to be lifted up. When the wealth and rank of the centurion are considered, and also the low estate in which Jesus appeared, the example of humility here set is well worthy of notice. But, however little the centurion was in his own eyes, he was just the person who was sure to receive honour from Christ. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—"He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The centurion added: "*But say in a word, and my servant shall*

be healed." And here we mark chiefly the strength of his *faith*. He was persuaded that our Lord could effect the cure, without seeing the patient, without the use of ordinary remedies, and merely by a word. And this was true, and had been shown in the case of the nobleman's son. The divine Saviour is not limited by distance, but is ever present in all places. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?" And this sentiment the centurion illustrates by a reference to the authority which he himself exercised. "For I also" (or, even I who) "*am a man set under authority,*" (that is, being a centurion, he was under the command of his superior officer, the tribune); yet even I "*have soldiers under me*" (for he had the command of a company), "*I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh;*" the soldiers, as in duty bound, obeyed his orders, whatever they were: and so also did his servants; for, adds he, "*And I say unto my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*" Now, though he does not draw it out at full length, yet the application he intends to be made of this is very plain. It is as if he had said: "As I have complete authority over those who are under me, so thou hast complete power over diseases, and canst always bring them on, or remove them at thy will: and here, in particular, thou art able, at once, though at a distance, to command this sickness away; and I will be most grateful to thee, if thou wilt effect this cure, in the way least troublesome to thyself."

We are here collaterally reminded of the very instructive and comfortable truth, that bodily diseases are, as it were, the servants of our Lord. They all execute his commission; they come and go at his bidding. This may be remembered, for the comfort of those afflicted ones who know and love him. They have, indeed, no reason to despond whose diseases are under the control of such a friend.

Luke adds, that "*when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled*" at the centurion. This was not surprise, as if Christ had come to the knowledge of any thing of which he was before ignorant; but it was pleasurable admiration. "*And he turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*" Faith, like every other grace, exists in different degrees. Some have it only like a grain of mustard seed—have "little faith;" others have "great faith," and are "strong in the faith." This fact, properly attended to, would both prevent much rashness and uncharitableness in the way of judging others, and stimulate true believers to greater attainments. As for this Gentile centurion, his faith surpassed what had been exemplified by any of the people of favoured Israel. Our Lord further declared, as we read in the parallel passage of Matthew, that this was but one instance of many who should come out of the Gentile world: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the king-

dom of heaven : but the children of the kingdom"—the generality of those who were born within the visible kingdom—"shall be cast out into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

By this time, our Lord appears to have been quite near the centurion's house, and making as if he would soon enter into it. On this, the centurion, who had sent first the elders, and then some of his friends to Jesus, went out to meet him himself: this appears certain from Matthew. As the centurion still humbly and believingly urged his request personally, in a similar way with the messengers, our Lord complied with it exactly. He proceeded at first as if he would enter his house ; and this gave opportunity for the beautiful display of humility and faith which we have noticed. To have persisted farther, however, might have been thought not so attentive to the wish of his suppliant ; he therefore stopped short ; and taking the whole history together, the centurion was even more honoured than he would have been had our Lord entered into his house. According to Matthew : " Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way ; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour." And according to Luke : "*They that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.*" The cure was instantaneous, and complete, and therefore miraculous. Great must have been the joy of the restored servant, and great also the joy of his kind master. We have every reason to believe that there was more here than a bodily deliverance, and more here to be thankful for than a temporal favour. As for the centurion, we cannot suppose that such kindness, piety, humility, and faith as his, could perish : he must have been led on in the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the truth. The narrative, indeed, of Matthew, implies that the centurion is one of those who are now with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. As for the servant, he must have been altogether inexcusable, if what had been done for him did not, in conjunction with the advantages he must have enjoyed with such a master, lead him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for life eternal.

Without adverting again to the more minute features of this very pleasing history, let us, in conclusion, consider it, in what must be allowed to be one of the most important aspects in which it can be viewed, and that is *as it furnishes us with encouragement and direction to apply to Jesus Christ for our own salvation.* In common with all his other miracles, but with more than ordinary force, this miracle should be considered as furnishing us with decided proof of his *ability* to save us from our sins. In the cure of the other palsied man, described in the 5th chapter of this gospel, our Lord said : " That ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house." So, from this similar miracle the same

inference of his ability to save us should be drawn. It is not with Christ's own miracles exactly as with those of his apostles; they wrought miracles in his name, and in confirmation of his religion: he wrought miracles in his own name, and with the express purpose of proving that he himself had power to forgive sins. Let us look on this part of the sacred history, then, as one of many proofs that he is able to save, that he is possessed of an ability of merit, and an ability of power. He travels in the greatness of his strength, and is mighty to save. And is not this miracle an encouragement for us to apply to Christ, inasmuch as it is a proof of his *willingness*, no less than of his ability, to save us? When the elders applied to him, he immediately went with them, and said: "I will come and heal him." So, in the case of the leper, who said: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean; he put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." Why, then, should any of us doubt the willingness of Christ to help us? If there be any unwillingness, it is on our part; and he is saying: "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life."

But there is here also *direction* as to the way in which we should apply to Christ in behalf of ourselves, and for our own salvation. We should apply with deep *humility*. The centurion did not think himself worthy to go to Christ, or, that Christ should come under his roof. So, we must be convinced of our naturally condemned, sinful, and helpless condition. The fact is, that we have nothing good to bring to Christ, but must be contented to come to him as we are, that we may receive every thing good from him. We must come empty-handed, that we may be ready to lay hold of what he offers, and that out of his fulness we may receive grace upon grace. Let every one of us come to him, saying: "Lord, I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies; but do thou take pity upon me: only speak the word, and I shall be healed."

We are taught, also, to apply to Christ, *earnestly*. The centurion and the elders besought him "instantly." Now, surely the blessing of salvation, for which we apply, well deserves, not only earnestness, but the most intense anxiety. With this blessing, all will be well; without it, all will be lost. It is that for which, above all things, we ought to wrestle. If we expect the blessing, we must seek it with all our hearts; and we must resolve not to let the Saviour go, until he bless us. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;" that is, by a holy and persevering determination.

But we are here taught that we must apply to Jesus Christ with *faith*. All our self-abasement, and all our earnestness, will lead to nothing good, if they do not issue in actual faith in Christ. It is well to be humbled, and to strive for forgiveness and healing by prayer; but we shall confess our unworthiness in vain, and pray in vain (if prayer it deserve to be called), if we do not

believe. It is to the grace of faith, that the blessing of acceptance is directly attached. We must, therefore, give Christ full credit for what he has done, and is still ready to do. We must receive the atonement: we must come to Christ as he is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. And this is not presumption. It would, indeed, be presumption to look for admission into heaven without preparation for it; but it is not presumption, it is a just confidence, it is a blessed privilege, nay, it is the commanded obedience of faith, to look to him, forthwith for justification, in order that we may be sanctified and prepared for heaven.

Think of this, you who have no faith in Jesus' name. Be assured that all your coming forth bodily to meet him, and all your anxieties, will be of no avail, without really crediting the testimony of God, concerning him and his finished work. Do not hesitate to rely on him; but commit yourselves sincerely, decidedly, heartily, solely, into his hands.

But the centurion furnishes an example, not only of faith, but of *very great faith*: and let this be attended to, and improved by all true believers. "I have not found so great faith," said our Lord, "no, not in Israel." Observe, faith is that which, above every thing, Christ seeks. To speak after the manner of men, he is ever looking out to see where he can discover it. Wherever it is, there he notices it. No doubt, he is somewhat pleased, even with the weakest degrees of it, even where it is but as a grain of mustard seed. He does not despise the day of small things. The bruised reed he does not break, and the smoking flax he does not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. But observe, my friends, Christ expects, and justly expects, to find great faith in Israel. Let those of you then, who are truly of Israel, who have indeed the faith of the gospel, and especially those who have been long believers, but who are weak in the faith, reflect on the examples of great faith furnished by the centurion and others; and let their noble confidence shame you out of your unbecoming remains of distrust. "If you will not believe," firmly and confidently believe, "surely you shall not be established:" but the Lord will keep your mind in perfect peace, when your heart is stayed on him. Recollect that a close correspondence will exist between the degree of your faith and the degree of all your other graces. Think of the words of our Lord to the centurion, as given by Matthew: "*As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*" Let the prayer of each of you be, "I believe; Lord, help thou mine unbelief."—"Lord, increase my faith." Thus shall you also increase in joy, and love, and hope, and holiness; and at last, obtain the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

LECTURE XXXIV.

LUKE VII. 11-17.

“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. 13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. 16. And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. 17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.”

THE evangelist John tells us, that when the disciples prayed our Lord to take some refreshment, he said: “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”—“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” He was indeed indefatigable in promoting the glory of his Father, and the temporal and spiritual good of men. He never had occasion to complain that he had lost a day. In this, we are called on, not only to admire him, but also to imitate him, in our different spheres of labour and usefulness. Like him, we should, according to our ability and opportunity, go about doing good: and whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might. The passage now read, taken in connection with what goes before, is one of the many illustrations of our Lord’s great diligence and unwearied benevolence. Having related the miraculous cure of the centurion’s servant in Capernaum, Luke, who is the only one of the evangelists who gives an account of the raising of the widow’s son, tells us, that the very “*day after, Jesus went into a city called Nain.*” It is the most common opinion that Nain was a city in the tribe of Issachar, at the foot of Mount Tabor, and about twelve miles from Capernaum. “*Many of his disciples*” accompanied him, and also a great multitude of other “*people,*” attracted, no doubt, partly by a desire for instruction, and partly by the fame of his miracles. It is still good to be where Christ is; that is, where he is wont to vouchsafe his spiritual and gracious presence; for there we may expect to have saving manifestations of his truth and power.

“*Now, when Jesus came nigh to the gate of the city*” probably towards evening, for then it was that the Jewish funerals usually took place, “*behold, there was a dead man carried out,*” for their places of interment were usually without their cities.

It is a consideration which ought to mortify all human pride,

that however beautiful, honoured, and beloved, any persons may be, during their life, they are but for a very short time tolerable, after their breath is fled. Sarah was "a very fair woman to look upon;" and when she died, her strongly attached husband, Abraham, mourned and wept; but he soon said to the sons of Heth: "Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Another and a more pleasing motive, however, prompts to this, namely, a regard to their memory: we wish our dead not only put out of sight, but disposed of decently and solemnly. Different customs, in this respect, have prevailed in different nations and different ages of the world. The *Egyptians* embalmed their dead: that is, they prepared the bodies, with certain operations and compositions, which prevented them from consuming. Thus, it is said in the last verse of the Book of Genesis, that "they embalmed Joseph and put him into a coffin." In modern times, bodies have been found, in Egyptian catacombs, or vaults, in a state of wonderful preservation, though they must have lain there for many centuries. There seems no good reason to wish for this strange kind of posthumous honour. May our bodies be embalmed, if the expression may be used, with religion. This, indeed, will not prevent them from crumbling into dust; but it will secure their rising in immortal beauty. The *Greeks*, and from them, the *Romans*, adopted the custom of burning the dead. Their funerals were generally gone about by torch light. After a great variety of ceremonies, the body was burnt on the funeral pile, or heap of wood. The ashes were extinguished with wine, and, along with the bones, which were not entirely consumed, were carefully gathered up, and deposited in an urn made of potter's earth, marble, brass, silver, or gold, according to the station and wealth of the individual. This urn was placed in the sepulchre; which, in the case of the rich, was often an elegant building above ground, and in the case of those of the poorer classes, generally a vault under ground. This custom was gradually laid aside, after the introduction of Christianity; and simple interment, or putting into the earth, is now generally adopted. Interment appears to have been one of the most ancient, as it is the most natural of customs. Very often, however, the bodies were deposited in caves or vaults, dug under the surface of the earth, or in the sides of rocks and rising grounds. Sarah was buried in a cave in the field of Machpelah: and the field and the cave therein were made sure to Abraham for a possession of a burying-place. The custom of depositing the dead properly wrapped in grave-clothes, without coffins, in such caves, generally prevailed among the *Jews*. Thus, Joseph of Arimathea took our Lord's body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre. The account of the resurrection of Lazarus, too, shows that he was buried in a similar manner.

As our Lord, then, and the attending multitude, approached Nain, they met a funeral procession. And how often are such processions still met, especially in crowded cities! So far, however, is the spectacle from always impressing us as it ought, that we often behold it with indifference. Surely, nothing but culpable thoughtlessness can then prevent a man from indulging such reflections as these:—"I too must die: and thus shall my remains be carried to their long home, while the mourners go about the streets for me. The event itself is certain; the time is altogether uncertain, and it may be very near. Am I, then, prepared for it? Lord, so teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom."

The case which now presented itself to the view of our Saviour, was a very afflicting one. The death of a son, or daughter, or any child, at any time of life, and in any circumstances, occasions great grief to a parent. Great was the grief of David, for even an undutiful and rebellious son. To each of the two messengers who were sent with the tidings of the victory, did he put the question, with the deepest anxiety, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And when he understood he had fallen, "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and, as he went, thus he said, O my son, Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" How deep the grief, too, of mothers, even for their infant offspring! "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning: Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not." But, while this mother in Nain had the feelings common to human nature, and the feelings which belonged to her sex, there were circumstances in her bereavement which rendered it peculiarly distressing. It was not a helpless infant she had lost, but an active "*young man*," or lad: and, we may suppose, he was not an undutiful, but an obedient and an affectionate son. Already he was of age and sense to be a companion to her; she must have been indulging the hope that he would assist her, and defend her, and cheer her, in her old age; and instead of supposing that she was to have these melancholy offices to perform to him, she must have been soothing herself with the idea that he would close her eyes, and attend her to the grave.

But this was not all;—he was not only her son, not only her well-advanced and useful and beloved son; he was her "*only son*." The death of one, out of several sons, is a great affliction, and will ever be felt as such; but the death of an only son is one of the most painful of strokes, and the mourning which it occasions is justly spoken of in Scripture as one of the heaviest known to humanity: "They shall mourn, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

Nor was even this the whole of this mother's sorrow, for she

had lost her son, her only son, when she was "*a widow*." Deep was her grief, and many a salt tear she shed, at that sad season, when, from being a happy wife, she became a desolate widow. Even then, however, there still remained to her one tie to the world; there was still one object, for whom she felt that it was even yet desirable to live. Though the Lord of all had taken away the desire of her eyes with a stroke, he had left her a son; her motherly love, and cares, and prayers, for that son, soothed the anguish that preyed on her widowed heart; and she was at last able to say: "This same shall comfort me, because of my sorrow." But now this new stroke causes her former wounds to bleed afresh, and inflicts a new, and, if possible, a still deeper wound. Now, she is a widow indeed. She is deserted, helpless, childless; her last stay is gone; her coal that was left is quenched.

This deeply afflicted widow had gone out to the funeral herself; for, it seems to have been usual in that country, as it still is in many places, for females to attend on such occasions. And surely, a very melancholy and affecting spectacle she would present, as she slowly moved along, to deposit all that was dear to her on earth in the silent grave. We are also told that "*many people of the city were with her*," attending the funeral, and, no doubt, doing what they could to comfort her. So, it is still incumbent on us to be ready to pay this last duty to the remains of our friends and acquaintances: and, on all such occasions, we should exhibit a kind and serious deportment.

"*And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her*;" he felt deeply for her distress, and he formed the gracious purpose of comforting her. He first expressed his compassion in words; he said unto her: "*Weep not*." If she had known all, she would have seen that she had no reason to weep; for, that was soon to be done, which was to turn her mourning into joy. No doubt, this kind address was accompanied with power, and, of itself, considerably raised her drooping spirits. But, our Lord proceeded to manifest his compassion by a wonderful act.

"*And he came and touched the bier*." We are to conceive of this bier, not as a close coffin, in which the corpse was enclosed, but as a frame of wood, on which the corpse was carried. Being properly dressed in grave-clothes, the body was laid on the bier, and covered over probably with a pall or funeral cloak. Our Lord touched the bier, as he touched the leper, without contracting any ceremonial uncleanness. On this, the bearers stood still, surprised, probably, at this unusual action, and, if they were previously aware of the wonders he had performed, not without expectation of his exerting his power for the restoration of the dead youth. Be this as it may, Jesus said: "*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise*." This mode of procedure and address clearly proved that the miracle, which was to follow, was Christ's work. It is true that to speak to the dead would have been in vain, had not the words been accompanied with almighty

power; but being thus accompanied, they were effectual. "*He that was dead*" was restored to life; and, in proof of this, "*sat up, and began to speak.*"

Of this miracle, we may remark, that our Lord performed it *of his own accord*. Sometimes he wrought miracles on the personal application of the afflicted individual, as in the case of the leper. At other times, he wrought miracles on the intercession of others, as in the case of the centurion's servant. But here, he works a miracle spontaneously, and without an application from any quarter. Now, we should not only admire this conduct in our Lord, but imitate it, in so far as it is imitable by us. While we should be ready to do what we can for the relief of the distressed, when we are actually applied to, we should not always wait till such applications be made: the sight, or hearing, of trouble, ought to be enough to call forth our active sympathy; nay, we should at times go in search of distress—the cause which we know not we should search out.

Observe, again, that our Lord performed this miracle *by his own power, and in his own name*. When Elijah restored to life the widow of Zarephath's son,* it was obviously by a prayer to God, and not at all by his own power; for "he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come unto him again;" and it is added, "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah." When Elisha raised the Shunammite's son,† "he went in, and prayed unto the Lord." When Peter cured Æneas of the palsy,‡ that apostle said: "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." And when the same apostle restored Tabitha to life, he not only said: "Tabitha, arise," but "kneeled down and prayed." So also in the case of the restoration of the lame man, at the Beautiful gate of the temple, Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Mark these cases, and compare them with the form of words in the miracle before us: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise:" and then you will see the irrefragable argument thence deducible for the superior dignity, nay, for the supreme divinity of our Lord.

We remark, too, that this young man's restoration was *complete at once*. He was restored from death to life, the moment our Lord gave the command. And not only did his soul return to animate his body, but his body was restored to perfect health and strength. In proof of this, he sat up, and began to speak. Surely nothing but the mighty power of God could accomplish this.

We are not told what the young man said when he was restored to life; and it would be in vain to form conjectures on the subject. We are informed, however, that Jesus "*delivered him to his mother;*" which seems to imply that he took him by the hand, and kindly presented him to her. This action may have been intended partly to comfort her as the principal person

* 1 Kings xvii. 21.

† 2 Kings iv. 33.

‡ Acts ix. 34, 40, iii. 6.

concerned, and partly to remind the lad of the obligation under which he lay to show her all dutiful attention, and to render her every assistance in his power. And what a meeting must this have been! The most like to it which we can now suppose to occur, is that which has occurred on some very rare occasions when a son, who had been long away in some distant land, where it was believed he had died, or who had been fully believed to have been lost at sea, returns to gladden the hearts of his parents. But this case was even still more touching, as the transition on the part of the mother, was from the deepest grief, for the mitigation of which sufficient time had not yet elapsed, to the greatest joy. To what mutual congratulations and endearments would natural affection now give rise! Nor, surely, would they neglect the warmest acknowledgments of gratitude to their great Benefactor.

No wonder that "*there came a fear on all*" who witnessed this wonderful work. There was, indeed, something in a dead man sitting up in his grave-clothes, on the bier, and beginning to speak, which was sufficient to move even persons of strong nerves. The fear here spoken of may have been little better in some than this alarm, or perhaps, that terror with which the consciousness of present Deity inspires sinners: in many, however, it appears to have been a commendable reverential awe. We are told that "*they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is raised up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.*" They not only ascribed the glory of this miracle to God, but very justly viewed it as a proof that Jesus was a great prophet, and that God had at last resolved to deliver his people. How far they were generally disposed to conclude, in light and conviction, that Jesus was the Messiah, may be a matter of doubt. Some of them believed in him to salvation; but the majority, there is reason to fear, failed to follow up their convictions, and perished in unbelief and impenitence.

"*And this rumour of him,*" says Luke, "*went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.*" The report of this miracle, and the consequent belief of his being a prophet sent of God, spread far and wide; and thus a strong desire to see him was extensively diffused, and multitudes were prepared to flock to his preaching.

And now, in looking back on the history of this astonishing miracle, ought we not to draw the same conclusion from it as its actual spectators, but with more light and faith, and permanent practical benefit, than the generality of them? Should we not conclude from this *that the chief of prophets is come, and that God has visited us with a Saviour?* Should we not believingly and gratefully exclaim, with Zacharias: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began?" This miracle, you observe,

was performed in the presence of a vast many witnesses: it was performed before two crowds met together at the gate of Nain—the crowd accompanying Christ, and the crowd accompanying the funeral procession. To have attempted to palm a false history on the people soon after the time, would have been ridiculous. We have, therefore, all the proof of the truth of the miracle that can be desired, and may unhesitatingly come to the conclusion just stated. Thus, too, it was, that after our Lord had miraculously fed the multitude, those who saw that miracle said: “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.” But let us not stop short with this acknowledgment. We must receive whatever he, as a prophet, declares. We must receive the will of God revealed by him for our salvation. We must receive it as it is contained in his written Word, and that, too, as disclosed and efficaciously applied to us by his Holy Spirit. Nor will it be enough to say that his coming was the great visitation long predicted, and promised to the world at large, if we do not ourselves receive and welcome that visit, and if we do not meet it with corresponding feelings, and do not glorify God in the day of our visitation. May the great Prophet and mighty Benefactor, who has condescended to visit this earth, mercifully visit us with his special presence and saving grace! Remember us, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. Oh, visit us with thy salvation: that we may see the good of thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory with thine inheritance.

As necessarily connected with the general doctrine of the divine mission of Christ, and as proved and illustrated by this miracle, let us also notice the important truth, that *he is still able to raise the dead, both the spiritually and the literally dead*. As to the spiritually dead: men are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins; but these he is able to quicken, and many of these he does actually quicken. He quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which are not as though they were. Here, too, he employs his command: he gives the exhortation from his Word: “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” And here, too, as in the case of this miracle, the command would be vain, were it not for divine power accompanying it. To this subject the words in Ezekiel have been often applied: “Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.” The prophet prophesied, as he was commanded; and the result was an exceeding great army. So let us go on prophesying—that is, preaching; and may the Lord send the Spirit of life into many a dead soul. Here, too, we have evidence of our Lord’s ability to effect, and of the certainty that he will effect, the resurrection of all the dead at last.

He who said effectually: "Young man, Arise," will speak the word which shall quicken all who are held of death. "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." In the certainty of this event, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

But, especially, is this history full of *instruction and consolation, in reference to relative blessings and relative bereavements*. There is here a lesson of thankfulness to those who have their only sons, or, indeed, any of their near connections, on whom they depend, or to whom they are peculiarly attached, spared with them. Think of this, my friends, that though it may not be so striking, yet it is as real a blessing, that your friends are preserved in life, as it would be to have them restored from death. Let the kindness of the Lord in this be gratefully acknowledged by you. At the same time, let the frequent occurrence of such bereavements as the one here recorded, remind all of you of the uncertain tenure by which you hold your relations: and especially let it remind parents of the uncertainty of their children being left with them. Remember that, though your children be dear to you, they are mortal: and that though you may have but one son, he may soon be taken away. How carefully should you, therefore, attend to the spiritual welfare of your children, while you have them! By the help of God, seek their salvation while yet it is in your power to be instrumental to their good. Let them not remain in ignorance and indifference, through your fault. Employ the strongest and kindest methods you can think of, to inspire them with the fear of God, and the love of the Saviour. And lose no time: for how know you but that it may soon be too late? Forthwith speak to them plainly, exhort them affectionately, instruct them carefully, and pray with them earnestly. It will be quite too late for you to think of these things, when the cold and heavy hand of death is settling down upon them; and, if they die before you have done your duty to them, no miracle will be wrought to restore them to life, but you will be left bitterly to lament your neglect of the opportunity for ever past.

How very appropriate is this passage *to parents who have been bereaved of their children*! Probably, there are several now present who have been afflicted exactly in the same way with the woman of Nain, who lost her only son when she was a widow: on such a case, however, it would be injudicious to be very particular; for it is, no doubt, like a very tender wound, which can hardly bear to be touched. To apply the subject somewhat more generally, though not to the exclusion of this case, various admonitions are here suggested to you who have been deprived by death of your children, or other very near connections. It was to be expected, and it was right that you should feel such

strokes very deeply; but it is proper for you to consider that this is not all the effect they ought to produce on you. The bursting heart and the gushing tear, are very amiable and very affecting; but it would be deluding you, to say that they are any certain mark of true religion. Inquire whether you have proper views of these bereavements, as coming from God, and sent for the express purpose of leading you to himself. Have you submitted dutifully to God's disposal, and do you acquiesce heartily in it? Have you said, and do you still say, with love to him who smote you: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?" Have your bereavements been so sanctified to you, as to have brought you in stronger faith to the Saviour—as to have increased your spirituality—as to have crucified you to the world—as to have enlivened your secret devotions—as to have originated, or added, life to your family worship—as to have mortified your sins, and promoted your holiness? Have you thus resigned to God those who are dear to you, and thus permanently improved the events? If so, it is well. In the whole history of the faithful and pious Abraham, there is nothing so demonstrative of his faith and piety, nothing of which the Most High takes so approving notice, as his conduct in reference to Isaac, his only son. Already was the sacrifice made in his heart, when God stayed his hand, and said: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." See, too, my friends, that the sharp lesson you have received of the insufficiency of the creature, however dear, teach you to delight yourselves in the Creator, who is all-sufficient, and who will never leave you, nor forsake you. He whom you loved, is dead: but say you: "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock." Other refuge fails; flee you, then, to the Lord, and trust in him at all times. Your taper is gone out, but mark the rising morn. The stars which pleased you with their twinkling light, have disappeared; but see the Sun of righteousness. The streams of created comfort are run dry; go, then, and ever keep to the uncreated and inexhaustible Fountain.

Truly happy are all of you, notwithstanding the heaviest relative bereavements, whose minds are thus directed: and doubly happy are you, if you have reason to think that those who have left you died in the Lord. Then must this miracle be fraught with peculiarly powerful consolation to you. You are not to expect, indeed, that Christ will immediately work a miracle, and restore your friends to you on earth; but you are here reminded that he will raise them up at the last. "I know," said Martha, of her brother Lazarus, "that he shall rise again in the resurrection, at the last day." You know this of your pious dead also. You know that they are already happy in the vision of God, in a disembodied state; and that their soul and body, united in the resurrection, shall be perfectly happy for

ever. To you also, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is touched with a fellow-feeling of your infirmities, is saying: "Weep not." To you the words of Paul to the Thessalonians may well come, with much sweetness and power: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

And this suggests the last idea which we would propose to your consideration at this time, namely, the very consolatory and instructive idea that *pious persons who know, and love, and are closely connected with each other, on earth, will also know and be happy in their intercourse with each other, in heaven.*" This idea seems emblematically represented by the circumstance of our Lord delivering the young man to his mother, after he had raised him from the state of the dead: at all events, the grounds on which it rests are strong. There have, indeed, been some who have represented this opinion as savouring too much of earthly things, and have considered it a proof of extraordinary spirituality to oppose it, or, at least, to speak of it as quite uncertain, or as a matter of indifference. But, though we ought neither to place it in the same scale of importance with some other opinions, nor to look upon the known presence of any creatures whatever, as a circumstance at all worthy of being compared with the presence of God and the Lamb; yet, after all due allowance is made for the superiority of the heavenly to the earthly state, the argument for this opinion remains untouched. It is true that, in heaven, there is a great multitude which no man can number, so that, according to our present limited ideas and powers, there might seem to be a difficulty in finding out our former friends: it is true that God himself is a sufficient portion for the soul: it is true that in heaven men neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are, in this respect, as the angels: it is true that no individual can ever find another individual who will be indifferent to him, or to whom he will be indifferent: it is true that every saint will find a friend in every saint he meets: it is true that the spirit will universally prevail which animated Christ, when he said: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother:" it is true that there will be nothing selfish, or contracted, in the benevolence of the blessed: and it is true that the circumstances common to them, such as, their having been all created by the same God, all inhabitants of the same earth, all ruined in the

same fall, all ransomed by the same blood, and all sanctified by the same Spirit, must ever form the chief, the strongest, the most delightful bond of union among them. But, why may not all this be, without destroying other principles of their constitution, and without obliterating all traces of their private history? Why may they not seek those they once called their own, and be directed where to find them? Why may they not enjoy God in all, as well as all in God? Why should they not be especially delighted with renewed intercourse with those whom they well knew, and with whom they were closely connected, below; especially, when everything imperfect in that intercourse is done away? Nay, this is not stating the case strongly enough. Why are *we* called on for proof at all? The burden of proving lies on the other side. Unless there be conclusive evidence to the contrary, from reason, or unless it can be shown from revelation, that God will exert a positive act of power to destroy, in the minds of the glorified saints, all recollection of what is past; it follows, of course, from our very constitution, that believers who knew each other and loved each other on earth, must still know and love and be happy in each other, when they meet in heaven. But there is no evidence whatever in support of the opposite and gloomy creed. Reason, we see, is quite in favour of our opinion. Quotations might be given from various heathen sages and Christian writers, in support of it. It is, indeed, a rational and unavoidable deduction, as already hinted, from the faculty of memory. It is supported, too, by Scripture. The revealed principle of the general judgment of men requires that those who knew them on earth, should not only be present, but should still know them, in order to perceive and testify the justice of the sentence. While the general bearing of Scripture is in favour of this opinion, some passages are especially so: as, for example, when David said of his dead child: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me;" when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are spoken of as sitting together in the kingdom of heaven: and when our Lord is said to have delivered this young man to his mother, after he had raised him from the state of the dead. In subserviency to considerations which refer more directly to the presence of our God and Saviour, there is surely something in this idea very delightful and very instructive. Think of this, believers, and be no more sad with unmitigated sadness for your pious dead. As they are not lost to themselves, so neither are they lost to you. They are only gone before you. You shall find them again; you shall meet them in paradise, when all your imperfections, and all their imperfections, shall have vanished; where there shall be nothing to impede, but everything to increase, your felicity; and where separation shall never again be known.—And O, let it be carefully remembered by us all, that these pleasing anticipations can only be realized in the way of the

faith and obedience of the gospel. Let none of us deceive ourselves with dreams of such felicity, while we continue in unbelief and sin. But let us see to it that we and our friends be connected by the tie of grace, for this is the only tie which will prove indissoluble. Let us live together on earth, so that we may live together in heaven. Then shall we be blessed in each other, blessed in all the glorious company of saints and angels, and still more blessed in our God and Redeemer, through the endless ages of eternity.

LECTURE XXXV.

LUKE VII. 18-23.

“ And the disciples of John showed him of all these things. 19. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 21. And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22. Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

OUR Lord had now been, for a considerable time, employed in the prosecution of his public ministry, which he confirmed by many wonderful works; and, in particular, as related by Luke, in the preceding part of this chapter, he had lately performed the two striking miracles of healing the centurion's servant, and raising the widow of Nain's son from the dead. No wonder that “ this rumour of him,” the report of these things which he had done, went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

The evangelist now adds: “ *And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.*” We read before,* that “ Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him,” that is, by John the Baptist, “ for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which he had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.” The Baptist still continued in prison, at the time to which the passage before us refers. This appears plainly from the parallel passage in Matt. xi. 2: “ Now, when John had heard in the prison, the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples.” Though imprisoned, he was not so closely shut up but that his disciples had access to him: and it is pleasing to observe that they were neither afraid, nor ashamed, to resort to him in this oppressed, and perilous, and, humanly speaking, forlorn condition. Though thus confined in the dismal prison himself, he would, doubtless, rejoice to hear of the proceedings of the Saviour. As the friend of the Bridegroom, he had formerly rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice, and had said: “ This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” So, though immured in that dungeon, from which he was never to get out in life, he would still be glad, when he heard of the Redeemer's wonderful works, and growing fame. From this we learn that it is a duty to visit those who are in

* Luke iii. 19.

bonds, and especially, to acknowledge and visit those who are thus suffering for the truth's sake. "I was in prison," says our Lord, "and ye visited me." In this way of instrumentality, or by his own more direct spiritual influence, the Lord conveys comfort to his afflicted people.

When John heard these things of Jesus, "*calling unto him two of his disciples, he sent them unto Jesus saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*" It is possible, according to the idea of some, that the Baptist, from the trying circumstances in which he was placed, may have fallen into partial and temporary doubt; for, it is certain that some degree of unbelief may exist in the mind of one who is, on the whole, faithful. Or, he may have felt like Abraham, who, though a strong believer, asked for a sign to confirm his faith. Most probably, however, John himself had no doubt on the subject. When we reflect on his decided testimony to Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," and on what he saw and heard at the time he baptized him in Jordan; we must conclude that he was led to take this step almost solely for the benefit of his disciples. He probably perceived that his own long and severe oppression, and the circumstance of Jesus abstaining, for the most part, from any express declaration of his Messiahship, were causing his disciples to be at a loss what to think. He therefore wished to have a distinct declaration from Jesus, or, at least, to give, in this formal way, and by an express mission, an opportunity to his disciples to learn our Lord's true character, and to judge for themselves.

"He that should come," was a common way in which the Jews designated the Messiah. It had been prophesied by Jacob, that Shiloh should come: Daniel had taught them to expect, about a certain time, "Messiah the prince:" Zechariah had said, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee:" and, in reference to a passage in the Psalms, many of the people, on the occasion of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, cried, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." "He that cometh," then, was a designation of the Messiah. This description of him, when used by the Jews, implied their firm belief that this great Deliverer would actually come, their earnest longing for his coming, and their considering him as the greatest and most welcome messenger that ever was to come. It is well known, too, that there prevailed, throughout the Jewish nation, a very general expectation that he was to appear about the time he did come into the world. John wished, then, to have an explicit declaration, from the mouth of Jesus himself, if he was the Messiah, or whether they should not look for another person in that character. He sent *two* of his disciples, no doubt that they might encourage one another, and as a competent number; for,

at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. Thus also, our Lord sent out the twelve, and the seventy, two and two.

The men whom John employed, executed their commission faithfully. “*When they were come to Jesus, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*” To this question our Lord did not give a categorical or a direct reply. But he replied to it, very emphatically and effectually, by actions; and these actions laid a foundation for an answer much more convincing than any direct and short verbal answer could have been. He proceeded forthwith to work a variety of miracles. “*In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities*” or weaknesses; “*and plagues,*”—plagues, or scourges, seems a general word for different kinds of diseases; “*and of evil spirits,*” casting out devils from those who were possessed by them; “*and unto many that were blind he gave sight.*” Having performed these miracles, as accompaniments and confirmations, probably, of the instructions he at the same time delivered, “*Jesus answering, said unto them*” (the two messengers), “*Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed the deaf hear, the dead are raised.*” As particular examples of these different kinds of miracles occur, from time to time, in the course of the evangelical history, which furnish a more favourable opportunity, and an obvious call, for their illustration, we shall not enlarge on them here. It is enough to observe, that our Lord directed the messengers to describe to John Baptist the miracles he performed—of most of the kinds of which they had seen specimens with their own eyes, and the rest of which they had learned from the undoubted testimony of others; and that having done this, he left John and them to draw, from these miracles, their own inference as to his Messiahship. Indeed, this procedure amounted, virtually, to an answer in the affirmative as to his being the Messiah; but it was much more satisfactory and convincing than if Jesus had merely said, I am the Messiah, or, I am he who was to come: and there can be no doubt that it was considered by the messengers as decisive, and was, to John, perfectly satisfactory. Our Lord rather declined, for the most part, to say expressly that he was the Christ; influenced, no doubt, in a great measure, by a carefulness not to give prematurely, and before his hour was come, a handle to his enemies to proceed against him. He did, however, on several occasions, directly assert his Messiahship, both in the early, and in the advanced stages of his history. Thus, when the woman of Samaria had said: “I know that the Messiah cometh, who is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things; Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.”* In like manner, in the case of the man restored to sight, recorded in the 9th chapter of John, our Lord said to the man: “Dost thou

* John iv. 25.

believe in the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." He also said, before the multitude :* "I am the light of the world."—"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." These declarations were explicit. Yet they were not considered satisfactory: "Thou bearest record of thyself," said the unbelieving Jews, "thy record is not true." Though the record was true in itself, and entitled to full credit, yet it was established by the miracles; and the inference deduced from these was peculiarly convincing. Hence, our Lord was accustomed to appeal to his miracles, rather than frequently to make positive declarations. "When Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch, then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."†

The inference, from our Lord's miracles, in favour of his mission and doctrine, is plain to the simplest capacity. "We know," said Nicodemus, "that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." When the man born blind was restored to sight by our Lord, the man said: "Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now, we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

But, there is an additional consideration connected with our Lord's miracles, which is quite conclusive as to his being not only a prophet, but the chief of prophets, the Messiah, namely, that it was foretold, in Old Testament prophecy, that when Messiah came, he should work miracles, and the particular kind of miracles, too, which Jesus actually did perform. It is certain that, in consequence of prophecy, the Jews expected that when Messiah should come, he would work miracles, and that many of them were accordingly convinced by our Lord's miracles. It is said, in John vii. 31, that "many of the people believed on him, and said: When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" When we look to the 35th chapter of Isaiah, we find it foretold, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." But this prophecy was exactly fulfilled in Jesus, according to the description of his works now before us by Luke: there is here, therefore, the evidence both of prophecy and of miracles, harmoniously combining to establish Jesus' Messiahship.

* John viii. 12, 24.

† John x. 23.

The answer which our Lord returned to the Baptist is recorded for our learning on whom the ends of the world are come; and there is no room for hesitation as to the conclusion we should draw from it. Messiah is indeed come; Jesus of Nazareth is he; and it would be in vain to look for another. May the unbelieving, deluded, and obstinate Jewish people soon be brought to this conclusion. And may we who admit it in theory, all follow it out in practice, by hearkening to Christ's instructions as our prophet, by relying on his atonement as our priest, and by obeying his laws as our king.

But our Lord, in his reply, referred to his teaching, as well as to his miracles, and directed the messengers to inform John that "*to the poor the gospel was preached.*" The whole tenor of the evangelical history shows that, personally, and by his apostles and evangelists, Jesus addressed the gospel, the good news of salvation, to all men, without respect of persons, and therefore, in a plain and intelligible manner, to the whole body of the people, especially to the poor who frequented his ministry, while those of the higher classes generally kept at a distance from him. The clause may also be rendered, "The poor are evangelized;" for, the original word seems to convey the idea not only of the publication, but of the effectual publication, and of course, the reception of the gospel. We often read of great crowds flocking to our Lord's preaching. It is recorded that "the common people heard him gladly;" and that when the chief priests and Pharisees "sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet." It was chiefly among the common people, too, that the gospel was successful afterwards. "Hearken, my beloved brethren," says the apostle James, "hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" It must not be forgotten, however, that, without setting aside its common and literal meaning, the word "poor" is also used to denote the spiritually poor—that is, the meek, the humble, and the contrite. Such our Lord particularly regarded; and with such alone, whatever might be their outward circumstances, the gospel would be successful. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them into babes."

Now, this fact of the poor having the gospel preached to them, or being evangelized, was an evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus, not only as it was a truly noble circumstance in itself, but also as it was a fulfilment of prophecy. Our Lord himself taught that it was a direct fulfilment of the prediction in the 61st chapter of Isaiah, as we had formerly occasion to see, when considering the 4th chapter of Luke, from the 18th verse. In the synagogue of Nazareth, our Lord having read the passage, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," or, as it is in the Old Tes-

tament, "to preach good tidings unto the meek," proceeded to say, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

And, is it not a delightful consideration, that the gospel is still preached to the poor, and still successful with many of them? It is true that there are many in poverty who are obstinately wicked, and some in the highest stations who are faithful and exemplary; but, the man who labours hard for his daily bread, may often be pitched, in knowledge and character, with the man of rank, very much to the advantage of the former. Let, then, the poor see to it that they thankfully accept of an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ: and let us all cultivate the meek, lowly, and contrite mind of those of whom our Lord says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord closes his reply to the messengers, with the words, "*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*" It is certain that most of the people of that time were, from various causes, so offended, or stumbled, at Christ, as to reject him: he therefore uttered a solemn caution against this; and declared that they, and they only, who should not be offended in him, should be truly blessed, and be partakers of the benefits of salvation. Instead of enlarging, however, on this idea, as applicable to John's disciples and the Jews of that day, it will be more directly for our edification that we view it in relation to ourselves. It is still common to be offended in Christ—to find causes of stumbling in him, and in his gospel. All infidels, all openly profane persons, all carnal professors, all who do not really believe in him and obey him, nay, many professed builders of the Church, are offended in him, and reject him. "It is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, he is precious; but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." Let us, then, proceed to consider some of the circumstances, on account of which, many are offended in Christ, and stumble, to their hurt and ruin;—let us consider them, that we may be on our guard against them.

1. It is agreeable to the connection of these words, and of importance to ourselves, to observe, that some are offended, and stumble at Christ on *the pretence that there is not sufficient evidence of his divine mission*. Some are disposed to say, that there is not sufficiently strong proof to justify a rational belief of the things which are said to have been done by Christ at such a distance of time, and of the truth of his heavenly origin. We cannot attempt here to enter at large into the evidences by which the truth of the gospel is supported: a few general observations must suffice. The distance of time at which any events are said to

have taken place, is no argument against their truth, when they are supported by sufficient testimony and authentic history. For example, every person, of any reading, believes that there was such a man as Alexander the Great, or Augustus Cesar, as firmly as he believes that, at this moment, there is a governor in any foreign country, or a sovereign who wears the British crown. Now that such a person as Jesus Christ appeared at a certain time, is not denied by infidels themselves. As his appearance in the world is indisputable, so the leading facts in his history are confirmed by testimony of the most satisfactory nature. He wrought, as we have here seen, a variety of miracles, which proved him to be sent of God. The ancient prophecies, so exactly fulfilled in him, demonstrate him to be the promised Messiah, and leave all unbelievers, especially unbelieving Jews, without excuse. We may now add, that the minute predictions which he himself delivered, several of which have been already fulfilled, and some of which are fulfilling at this day, prove him to be a true prophet. The excellence and consistence of the contents of the Bible, furnish a very striking internal evidence of its inspiration. The amazing progress of the gospel is likewise a proof of its divinity. That this system, supported only by a few, generally illiterate men, should gain ground against the schemes of philosophers, and the established religions of the times; that it should so gloriously triumph over the power of princes, and the terrors of persecution; that it should, without force of arms, and by the instrumentality of mere preaching, spread so rapidly over a great part of the civilized world;—this can be accounted for only on the supposition of its truth. Had it been of men, the opposition it encountered would certainly have brought it to nought. Its spread proved that it had God for its author, and that he effected its progress in the world by his almighty providence, and by the influence of his Spirit. On the whole, it is most unreasonable to pretend that there is any want of evidence in this case. The proofs are so various and so strong, that, if there be persons who can attentively consider, and yet resist them, no evidence can be conceived which would satisfy them.

2. Some are offended in Christ because of *circumstances connected with the person and history of Christ himself*. And here the opposite extremes meet, some stumbling at his dignity, and others at his humiliation. The Mohammedans are strongly prejudiced against the gospel, on the ground of the unquestionable fact of its asserting the proper Godhead of Christ; and the Socinians, in rejecting that doctrine, virtually reject the gospel itself. But why should we be offended at his *dignity*? Is not this rather the great glory of the Christian scheme? Nothing short of divine power, and infinite merit, could be sufficient to accomplish our deliverance.

On the other hand, some are offended in Christ, because of his *humiliation*. The lowliness of the station in which he appeared

furnished an objection of old: "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him." * But, instead of taking offence at his lowliness, ought we not rather therein to admire his gracious condescension? and ought we not to remember that it was prophesied that he was to grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground—that he was to have no form, nor comeliness, no beauty—that is, no earthly beauty—that men should desire him? The reproach and various indignities, too, and especially the ignominious death of Christ, have been considered by many as bringing disgrace on his cause, and furnishing ground of offence. Christ crucified has been to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. Had Jesus been admired and courted by the world; had he marched a mighty conqueror at the head of great armies; had he, after a splendid life, died a death of earthly glory;—then worldly men would have been ready to rank themselves among his admirers. But to be followers of one who, after a life of reproach, was put to death as a vile malefactor—this is what they cannot submit to. It is unnecessary, however, to enlarge on the answer to this objection; for, in the humiliation and death of the Redeemer, is found that which is the very foundation of the hope of the enlightened and ransomed sinner, and which leads him to say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. Some are offended in Christ on account of his peculiar *doctrines*. The ground of offence at some of these doctrines, such as those of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, is that they are mysterious. But what is there which we can fully comprehend? what is there which is not mysterious, when searched into very closely? Enough is known, enough is intelligible of these Christian mysteries, to show their importance and glory. It is chiefly, however, those doctrines which are most directly opposed to the pride of self-righteousness, which now offend. The doctrine of original sin, which teaches that we are totally fallen, condemned, depraved, and helpless, and implies the necessity of regeneration and conversion, is a great stumbling-block to many. So, also, the true scriptural doctrine of justification freely by the grace of God, through the atonement of Christ, and by faith alone, is peculiarly contrary to all the notions of the unenlightened and proud mind. Many stumbled at this doctrine of old, namely, all who, as we read at the end of the 9th chapter to the Romans, "sought righteousness, not by faith, but by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone: as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence; and

* Matt. xiii. 54.

whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." So many stumble at this doctrine still. Were we to give up this doctrine, a great part of the "offence of the cross" would cease. But is there any good reason of offence; is there really any thing at which men ought to stumble here? Rather, is not the doctrine of salvation by grace, a most noble illustration of the excellence of the gospel? Is not this the only way in which salvation can come to the guilty at all? Instead of being offended at it, then, ought not each of us to embrace it, and hold it fast, and say with all confidence and joy: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief?" There is, indeed, no just cause of offence, but there is everything to admire, in Christ's doctrines. They are all demonstrative of wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy; they all proclaim "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men."

4. Some are offended at Christ because of his *precepts*, or the holy life which he requires them to lead. He appears in the light of a lawgiver, laying down rules for the regulation of the conduct: and those only who obey him as such, are acknowledged by him as his people. "If ye love me," says he, "keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." But the holy life which he requires is offensive to many. They stumble at it, and are ashamed, or afraid, or disinclined to lead it. While the general tenor of his precepts is offensive to them, some are peculiarly so: for example, the duty of self-denial and taking up the cross to follow him—the duty of meekness—the duty of forgiveness—the duty of the regular observance of all the ordinances of religion—the duty of family religion—the duty of nonconformity to the world—all the duties, indeed, the observance of which form decidedly the Christian character. These they either question the propriety of, or have not the courage or the heart to observe. But judge calmly, if this be reasonable. Jesus Christ requires you to do, not what is hard, or hurtful, but what, with his grace, is pleasant and profitable. He forbids only what will prove ruinous to you: he enjoins only what is for your true good. Is it right, then, to stumble at what he enjoins? Is it wise, is it reasonable, is it manly, to be deterred from your duty, by the opinion of others, by the ridicule of the wicked, and by the laugh of fools?

5. Some are offended in Christ *on account of the conduct of those who profess to be his followers*. Though offence is often taken at what ought to be commended, yet, too often, the misconduct, more or less culpable, of those who bear the name of Christians, and who are even supposed to be real Christians, gives a handle to the ungodly to speak evil of religion, and hardens them more and more: while it so stumbles some who are beginning to inquire after the way of life, as to prevent their deliverance. But, however lamentable such misconduct may be, it is unjust to impute it to Christ, or his gospel. We ought always to distin-

guish between the system and the inconsistencies of those who profess to hold it. We ought to remember, that, whatever others may be, or may do, we have to answer for ourselves. And we should be aware that such offences are occasionally to be expected, and therefore, not allow ourselves to be stumbled by them. The following passages of Scripture furnish excellent warnings, both against laying such stumbling-blocks in the way of others, and against being overthrown by them ourselves: "It must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."—"Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way."—"Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them."

Once more; many are offended in Christ *because of the trials to which fidelity to him would expose them*. There can be no doubt, that many who attended on the ministry of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and who seemed to be, in some degree, influenced by it, were so stumbled by the various kinds of persecutions and sufferings which soon arose, as to draw back to perdition. Our Lord forewarned his disciples of the trials which were coming on them, in order that, being aware of them, they might be prepared to withstand them. "These things have I spoken unto you," said he,* "that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." Now, it is proper that we should all be on our guard against being offended at Christ, and proving unfaithful to him, because of the less striking, perhaps, but real persecutions and trials, which may assail us. We ought to take warning from the description of the stony-ground hearers—a description which still applies to many. They hear the word, and anon with joy receive it: yet having no root in themselves, they endure only for a season; "for when tribulation, or persecution, ariseth, because of the word, by-and-by they are offended." It is peculiarly important that this danger should be kept in view in our endeavours to promote the spiritual good of the young; and yet it is frequently very much overlooked. Are not young persons sometimes taught to expect greater encouragement from others to a good life, than the real state of facts justifies? Are they not sometimes told, that if they follow Christ, and lead a holy life, not only God, and their parents, and friends, and teachers, will love them, but all men, or almost all men, will love them? No doubt the approbation of the truly good generally attends the pious. But does it not happen, even for the most part, that, on their beginning to mix in society, young people find that, instead of being cheered on in the way to heaven, they are

* John xvi. 1.

much discouraged?—that instead of being the better thought of by all for strictness of principle and conduct, they are, by many, disliked and spoken against for it?—and do they not meet with those who even seek to reason, or persecute, or laugh them out of their early imbibed ideas of piety? Unquestionably this is the true state of things. Is it not, then, very important that they should be well informed of it? It is not enough that they be told of this slightly, and, as it were, by-the-by: it should be made a study to prepare and fortify their minds for encountering trials of various kinds; and they should especially be taught to expect, to resist, and to despise, ridicule and raillery. To every young person now present, who feels any desire to follow Christ, we give this warning and this counsel: Lay your account with meeting with such trials, and make up your mind not to be offended, or stumbled by them, or to think the less of the Redeemer and his ways. “My son,” says Solomon, “let not them depart from thine eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.”

And now, as encouragement to all of you, of every age and every description, not to be offended in Christ, but to admire him, and trust in him, and love him, and faithfully obey him, *consider the blessedness which will thus become your portion.* This is his own declaration: “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Those whose character is thus described, are blessed now: they are blessed in the possession of God’s favour; for their fidelity to Christ is a proof that they are the subjects of saving grace; more particularly, they are blessed with a sense of their need of a Saviour, with a knowledge of the truth, with faith, with pardon, with peace, with sanctification, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things. And, as they are blessed already, so they shall be blessed hereafter, unspeakably and eternally; for to them the Judge of all will say: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The great question, then, my friends, is: Is this blessedness to come upon you? It never can, if you be offended in Christ. But think not that you are blessed merely because you have taken no such outward, positive offence at him, as to have entirely broken off all appearance of connection with him. Not heartily to submit to him, not highly to admire him, is to be offended with him. “Kiss the Son,” then, “lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they,” and they only, “that put their trust in him.”

As for you, on whom this blessedness does indeed already rest, never forget the obligation under which you lie to be faithful to Christ and his cause, in all circumstances. Form not, however, your resolutions of fidelity to him in your own strength.

Jesus said to his disciples : “ All ye shall be offended because of me this night.”—“ Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”—“ Likewise also said all the disciples.” But we know the result. Peter denied him, and they all forsook him and fled. Trust not in yourselves, then, believers, but in the living God ; and say each of you, to him : “ Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live : and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

LECTURE XXXVI.

LUKE VII. 24-35.

'And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 25. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. 26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. 29. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. 31. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like. 32. They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. 33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But Wisdom is justified of all her children."

THE preceding verses brought before us an account of the mission of two of the Baptist's disciples to Jesus, with the question whether or not he was the Messiah, and also the reply our Lord made, first by actions, and then in words. He allowed these messengers to depart before he began to speak of John, and thus avoided the imputation of saying flattering things with the view of their being reported to the man whom he commended. As soon as they were gone, however, he pronounced on him a high encomium, in the presence of the assembled multitude. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." John had spoken in the most humble manner of himself, and in the most magnifying language of Christ: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me."—"There cometh one after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." But now, our Lord seems to study to speak of him in an honourable manner. May we not, from this, infer how all the faithful servants of God should think and speak of each other. They ought to avoid all jealousy and detraction, and they should esteem each other highly, and seek to promote each other's credit and success; for thus the general cause of religion will be most effectually advanced.

Our Lord begins with putting the question to the people: *What went ye into the wilderness for to see?*" We are told that when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of

Judea, there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan:" vast multitudes of the people flocked to see and to hear him. Jesus now puts them in mind of this; and calls on them to reflect on what were their intentions, at the time they went out, and, of course, what impression of John they had. In like manner, it will be well for us all to consider, on our going out to any religious opportunity, what are the motives which influence us, and what we expect and desire to see and hear. We should go, not to see our fellow-creatures, and to be seen of them, not to hear for our amusement; but we should go for purposes truly pious, to behold and to hear the messenger of the Lord, and for our spiritual instruction and impression. Let us attend to the words of the wise man: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."

Did you go out, asked our Lord, to see "*a reed shaken with the wind?*"—that is, a man of whom a bending reed, or bulrush, moving hither and thither with the wind, is a fit emblem. This is the first part of the encomium which our Lord bestows. John was no such feeble, wavering, unsteady person. In every part of his character, and particularly in the testimony he bore to Jesus, he was decided, faithful, uniform, and constant. In this he should be viewed as a pattern to all preachers of the Word. We must study to hold forth a determined, consistent, and uniform scheme of doctrine. To be contradicting, or explaining away, at one time, what we advance at another, is to be weak and worse than useless. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" But similar stability in principles and conduct is incumbent on every individual. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Christians must not be "children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine;" but must "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, and be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

But again, our Lord demands of them, "*What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they who are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts.*" It is in royal palaces, where those who are dressed in silk, and purple, and splendid attire, and who fare sumptuously at the luxurious banquet, are to be found. John of the wilderness dressed and lived in a very different way: for "he had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." And this was the second part of the commendation our Lord bestowed on John. He was a man of self-denied habits. Such habits well befitted the character in which he appeared, namely, that of a preacher of repentance. And, my brethren, though John is not now to be imitated in this to the very letter, yet we ought all to imitate him in his spirit.

We must mortify the deeds of the body, learn to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and not be entangled with the affairs of this life.

Once more, our Lord demands: "*But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.*" This was the third part of the encomium. John was indeed a prophet, and even superior in some respects to the prophets that were before him. He was peculiarly honoured in the circumstances of his birth. He had clearer discoveries of Christ than any who preceded him. The way in which he discharged the prophetic office was superior, for he not only predicted that Messiah was to come, but actually pointed out Messiah already come, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." He was also distinguished for great success in his ministry. But there was still another point of superiority in John, namely, that he was himself the subject of previous prophecy: and it is to this point which our Lord seems chiefly to refer, for he says: "*This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.*" This is quoted from Malachi iii. 1. In Malachi, the exact words are: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before *me*;" in which Jehovah declares, that John shall prepare the way before Jehovah himself. But here, in Luke, Jehovah is represented as addressing himself to his Son, and says to him, "He shall prepare the way before *thee*." From this change of expression, an argument arises for the Godhead of Christ; for, to prepare the way before Jesus, is to prepare the way before Jehovah; therefore, Christ is Jehovah. John, as Christ's forerunner, prepared the way for him, by exciting a great expectation of him, by a ministry calculated to convince of sin, and, of course, of the need of a Saviour; and by bearing direct testimony to him when he appeared. In somewhat similar terms, too, Isaiah prophesied of John, when he said: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." These circumstances were highly honourable to John; so that our Lord declares that "*among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist*;" that is, in plain terms, there is no greater prophet.

"*But,*" adds our Saviour, "*he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*" The kingdom of God is here put for the gospel dispensation; and the meaning of the declaration is, that every person, even the humblest and least advanced, who may be truly called a Christian, who enjoys the full light of the gospel, is in some respects superior to the Baptist. There is no comparison here as to personal character. But the New Testament believer is greater than John, as living under a nobler dispensation—a dispensation of more light, more liberty, and of the more abundant outpouring of the Spirit. In this

there is, probably, a particular reference to the New Testament prophets, as they may be called—that is, the apostles and other preachers: but the general principle is applicable to every New Testament believer. There are three periods referred to in this passage—first, the period of the Old Testament; secondly, the intermediate period of the Baptist; and thirdly, the period of the gospel: and as the second excelled the first, so does the third excel the second. How thankful ought we to be for the superior privileges which we enjoy, as living under this last dispensation! Jesus is still saying to us: “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” But, let it never be forgotten by us, that, if our privileges are great, so also is our accountableness. God forbid that we should be of those who are “exalted to heaven” in point of privileges, but who shall be “brought down to hell” because of their abuse.

Verses 29 and 30: “*And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.*” It may admit of a question, whether these words should be considered as Luke’s account of the effect of what our Lord said, or as a continuation of our Lord’s address to the people concerning John. If they are Luke’s account of the effect of Christ’s discourse at this time, they show that some were properly impressed by it, and that others continued hardened. But it is the more common opinion of interpreters, that this is a description by Christ of the effect of John’s ministry. The common people, and even the publicans, or tax-gatherers, and some of the worst characters, as is related before in the 3d chapter, listened to John’s ministry, and these “justified God,” and bore testimony to the wisdom of God in sending such a messenger to teach in such a strain; and, in token of this, were baptized by him. But the Pharisees, that proud and self-righteous sect, and the lawyers, also called scribes, and doctors of the law, from a conceit of their fancied moral worth, or of their extraordinary wisdom, rejected the counsel of God against themselves;* that is, frustrated the gracious design with regard to themselves, which John’s ministry was calculated to serve, and would not submit to his baptism. That this was the general rule, as to the reception and rejection of John’s ministry, appears also from what we read in the 20th chapter of Luke from the 3d verse. Addressing himself to the chief priests, and scribes, and elders, our Lord said: “I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then be-

* Or, towards themselves.

lieved ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet." And thus it is still, that pride and self-righteousness are more formidable obstacles to the reception of the truth, than ignorance and immorality. The mind that is entirely unfurnished, as it were, invites instruction; but the mind that is already pre-occupied with error, is but rarely undeceived. He who has, in some instances, grossly violated the divine law, may easily know that he is a sinner; but he who, having conducted himself with more propriety, feels satisfied with his state, is strongly fortified against all attempts to bring him down to the dust of self-abasement. Let all who are thus respectable, but not truly pious, beware of this danger. Scripture declares to them "the whole counsel of God"—the whole plan intended for their salvation. Let them beware of rejecting that counsel. Let them beware of frustrating the grace of God. As workers together with God, we beseech them that they receive not the grace of God in vain; but that, humble and self-condemned, they hearken to his counsel, and welcome his offered mercy.

The remaining verses of the Lecture contain the parable of the perverse children, suggested by what our Lord had just been saying concerning the Baptist, and illustrative of the obstinate and unreasonable conduct of too many towards both John and himself. "*And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.*" The Jews used pipes, or musical instruments, both on joyful occasions, such as marriages, and also on sorrowful occasions, such as mourning for the dead; adapting the nature of the music, of course, to the circumstances of each case, and employing, in the former, cheerful, and in the latter, plaintive strains. In this parable, children are represented imitating, as is usual with children, the practice of grown up people, at marriages and funerals. Those of the children who take the lead in these amusements, are brought in as complaining of some of their companions who would not join with them. They tried them in various ways, but found them so cross and stubborn, that nothing would please them, or prevail on them to take part in the amusement. Thus simply and beautifully does our Lord illustrate and expose the perverseness of the men of that generation, who rejected his own and the Baptist's ministry, for the most opposite reasons. "*For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine.*" He was very abstemious and austere in his diet: his food being locusts and wild honey; and as to his drink, he, no doubt, adhered exactly to the law prescribed by the angel to his father Zacharias, that he was "neither to drink wine nor strong drink." But, instead of being pleased with him, or commending him, because of his self-denial, the Pharisees, and other obstinate men, said, "*He hath a devil.*"

They imputed his conduct to demoniacal possession, and reviled him as beside himself. A similar opprobrium was cast on Christ himself, and also on the Apostle Paul. On the other hand, our Lord said, "*The Son of man*," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who being the Son of God, was also the Son of man, and known by that particular appellation, "*is come eating and drinking*;" that is, not studying any singularity of life, but eating and drinking moderately, like men in general. On various occasions, we read of him going into company, and complying with the common and innocent customs of society; as at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and in the houses of Zaccheus and of Martha and Mary. Though very far from furnishing any justification of sinful conformity to the world, this is certainly calculated to show his followers the impropriety of any affected singularity in the habits of common life. Jesus, then, lived in a different way from his forerunner, so that there was no room to object to him the austerity of John; nay, his manners appear to have been very cheerful and engaging. Well, were the men of that generation therefore pleased with him? Surely one would suppose they must have been contented at last. But they were far from it. They said, "*Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*" They basely called his compliance with the usual mode of living, intemperance: and his going into the company of sinners, which he did solely that he might seek their conversion, they perversely interpreted as a proof that he was fond of such society because of the bad characters he there found, and that he wished to encourage and confirm them in their evil courses. Many passages might be referred to in illustration of this; but let one suffice, which contains at once the objection and its refutation: "It came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house," (Levi, or Matthew's house) "behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

But however unreasonable the conduct of such objectors was, there were some of a wiser and better judgment; for, adds our Lord, finally, "*Wisdom is justified of all her children.*" Wisdom is here put for the wisdom which is from above—religion, or the revealed will of God respecting the way of salvation. She is justified—that is, approved of, commended, assented to, vindicated, and adorned—by all her children, by all who receive her, by all who believe and obey the truth. In short, the children of wisdom, is a way of designating truly wise people; and all who were of this character received the ministry, and acknowledged the suitableness of the life both of John and of Jesus.

Such is the account our Lord gave of the men of that generation; but a similar account may be given of the men of every generation—of men of the world in every age. In what remains, then, of this Lecture, we shall found, on the parable of the perverse children, some observations of general, practical utility.

We observe from this parable,

1. *That God employs a great variety of means, talents, and characters, to promote men's salvation.* We may now be considered as enjoying all the means of the different dispensations concentrated. We have the types, ceremonies, and prophecies of the Old Testament. We have the intermediate, searching, and awakening ministry of the Baptist. We have the familiar, winning, and gracious, but dignified, ministry of Jesus Christ. We have the writings of the apostles and evangelists, after the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We have also pastors and teachers, or various gifts and habits. One is a Boanerges, or a son of thunder; another is a Barnabas, or a son of consolation. One dwells most on what is alarming and awakening; another on what is consolatory and edifying. One excels in closeness of argument, another in fervour of affection, and a third is equally gifted in both these qualifications. Indeed, every minister is called on to employ the various considerations suggested in Scripture, with all the energy he can command. He is to adopt, at times, the cheerful, and at times, the mournful strain. He is to bring forward both the promises and the threatenings of the Word. He is to address himself both to the hopes and to the fears of his audience. He is to speak both of the joys of heaven and of the terrors of hell. To all these things every faithful minister is enabled, in some degree, to attend. And, even when the substance of the ministry is the same, the manner of it is often very different. There are great varieties, as to genius, taste, ability, simplicity, depth, polish, and the like. All these varieties, whether as existing in different individuals, or exemplified by the same individual, are wisely ordered, and are calculated to be very useful; for what may not be so well adapted to one class of hearers, may be exactly what is suited to impress another. And, as there are varieties of public gifts, so there are varieties of private gifts and of private manners; some being better qualified to be useful in one way, and others in another; and different individuals being characterized by different peculiarities, some of a more, and others of a less, pleasing nature. Thus, the words of the apostle are still, in a great degree, applicable: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

But we observe, 2dly, from this parable, that notwithstanding the variety of the means employed, they are still *generally rejected*. As the children of that generation rejected both John

and Christ, so do the children of this generation reject all the means of grace with which they are favoured. No doubt, some are obedient to the faith; but, generally speaking, there is still cause to complain, and to say: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Many plainly and openly reject the counsel of God against themselves, professedly disregard the call to repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and, perhaps, hardly ever come within the reach of that call. And of the multitudes who now come out to hear the gospel preached, too many resemble the multitudes who went out to hear the Baptist and our Saviour, and who are so well described by the similitude of the cross children sitting in the market-place. They are perverse and discontented, and obstinately set themselves to resist any impression being made upon their minds. If they do at all condescend to take any part in the service, it is in a very restrained and heartless manner. If they approve at all, it is in a very cold way. They are not affected in a way corresponding to the various subjects handled. When we pipe unto them, they will not dance; when we mourn unto them, they will not lament. That is, we can neither call forth in them any pious joy, nor any godly sorrow. If they are not positively offended with our representations, they at least trifle with them. When we proclaim the great things of God's law, they count them as a strange thing. When we speak even of the agonies of a dying Redeemer, they are so unaffected, as to oblige him, as it were, to say: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" When we invite them to the rich feast of gospel blessings, they make light of it; and, satisfied without an interest in the great salvation, and at ease under the shadow of impending ruin, they feel relieved when they are at liberty to go away, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Whatever means we adopt, whatever strain we try, whatever arguments we use, whatever exercises we engage in—preach we or pray we, warn we or beseech we, threaten we or allure we; it is all one to them, and all equally in vain.

3. The application which our Lord makes of this parable, suggests the observation that *many attempt to excuse themselves for their rejection of the gospel by imputing that rejection to the faults or peculiarities of ministers*. You observe that the perverse men, described in this passage, did not here directly call in question the truth of what John and Christ taught; but they rested the justification of their unbelief on faults which they pretended to find in their character and habits. In like manner, there are still many who do not dare to speak against religion itself, but who, nevertheless, attribute their neglect of it, and prejudice against it, to the faults of those to whom its ministration is committed; and who seem to think that these faults, whether real or supposed, will excuse them for continuing in sin. I do not allude to cases of decided and gross error and iniquity in the

ministry, which are truly dreadful; though even these, however they may account for, and in some degree palliate, can by no means excuse, the rejection of the gospel on the part of others. But I refer to faithful ministers, and say that it is common for worldly men to impute, with an air of complacency, their irreligion, not only to the real faults, but to the innocent peculiarities, nay, sometimes, to the very virtues, of such ministers. It often happens that, allowing the general truth of what they hear, men evade its personal application, and steel their hearts against it, or allow a dislike of it to creep on their minds, and then throw the whole blame, or the chief blame, on something of which they disapprove about its publishers. Is a preacher faithful and close?—then he is called harsh and uncharitable. Is he gentle and winning?—then he is called lax and flattering. Does he study to be very plain and intelligible?—then he is said to be weak. Is he at pains to give well-finished discourses?—then he is vain and affected. Do what he may, he is too simple, or too flowery; too cool, or too vehement; too long, or too short; too strict, or too easy. Nor are such perverse judges more easily pleased in private. If he keep up a becoming dignity, then he is proud. If he be condescending, then he is mean. If he prudently abstain from forcing himself in where he has no reason to think that he will either be welcome, or be of any use; then he is lazy and negligent. If he be very diligent, then he is obtrusive and troublesome. In short, with such people, everything is a fault, and he is never right. Far be it from us to plead for the perfection of those who are in the ministry: God knows that the best of them have many imperfections, and much reason to lie very low before him. God maketh men ministers (as of old he made priests) who have infirmity. But, if they were free from all unpleasing peculiarities, if they had no weakness and no sin, would these perverse men be therefore satisfied, and receive their message? By no means; perfection itself would not satisfy them. This is plain from the way in which they continually shift the pretended ground of offence, and from the treatment which, we say not John the Baptist, but the infinitely wise and holy Redeemer himself experienced. “The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?”

But the fact is, that this is, in a great degree, a pretence; for, as the faults and peculiarities of ministers could not justify the rejection, so neither are they the true cause of the rejection of the gospel. Whatever may be pretended to the contrary, it must be observed from this parable,

4. *That the true cause of men's rejection of the gospel is their obstinate, perverse, and inexcusable dislike to the gospel itself.* The real motives of men's conduct, and the real state of their affairs, are

often very different from what they give out; for they often make feigned professions, and act a feigned part, in order to impose on others. Thus, when some of the inhabitants of Gibeon went to Joshua and the men of Israel, declaring themselves to be ambassadors from a very far country, and showing old garments, and dry and mouldy provisions, as proofs of their having come a very long journey, the true state of things was very different from the pretended. So, with regard to religious questions, it is often necessary to distinguish the true motives from the ostensible. It is peculiarly important that every delusion here should be dissipated, because such deceivers not only study to impose on others, which is comparatively a small evil, but by habitually assigning feigned reasons for their conduct, often contrive, at last, to impose even on themselves. We say, then, in accordance with the spirit of this parable, that men's sinful dislike to the gospel itself, if not the sole cause, is by far the principal cause, of their rejecting it. It is easy to perceive that the unbelieving Jews had imbibed strong and inveterate prejudices against the humbling doctrines and self-denying duties which the Baptist and the Saviour taught, and that no change of habits on the part of these teachers would have made any material difference as to the success of their ministry. In like manner, the peculiarities and imperfections of faithful ministers, at the present day, are but incidental circumstances, of very small weight, in comparison of the opposition arising from the blindness, corruption, prejudice, obstinacy, perverseness, and enmity of the carnal mind. Sinners blame the mode in which the gospel is published; but it is the gospel itself which they dislike. They quarrel with the men who denounce their sins, and who propound to them holy duties; but it is their sins themselves which they will not part with, and it is the duties themselves which they will not observe. They say that it is only the particular way in which the light is brought to bear on them that is offensive to them; but the fact is, that they cannot endure the light itself. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." It is not the instrumentality employed to publish the truth that they dislike, so much as the truth itself. "Why do ye not understand my speech?" said our Lord—"even because ye cannot hear my words."—"And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." It is not the circumstantialia of religion, but its essentials, such as repentance, faith, and holiness, which constitute the great cause of offence. It may be observed,

5. That this parable contains much *instruction to the ministers of the gospel*. We should here feel admonished to be on our guard against giving any just cause of offence in our doctrine or life. If many are so disposed to carp at trifles, we ought conscientiously to study to conduct ourselves in a blameless, prudent, and respectable way, both in public and in private, or,

as Paul expresses it, to "give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." We should study, if possible, "not to let our good be evil spoken of."

Again, we are here taught to employ all proper means to impress our hearers. We should learn, both from John and from Jesus Christ. We should preach the law to convict, and the gospel to save. We should dwell both on doctrine and on duty. We should employ both the threatenings and the promises. We should change our voice, according to the different classes of men. When one expedient fails, we should try another. In whatever is consistent with conscience, we should be "made all things to all men, that we may by all means save some."

We here learn, too, not to expect always to please, or always to be successful. If we are faithful, we must excite the dissatisfaction of the ungodly and the prejudiced. "Woe unto you," says Christ, "when all men speak well of you." And, though we ought to be grieved, yet we should not be so surprised as to be discouraged, by our frequent want of success. This, however lamentable, is nothing new. If John and our Saviour were rejected by many, no wonder that we should be rejected. We must beware of being so affected by this as to be disheartened, and to cease our exertions. Indeed, this would be quite unreasonable, for there is still encouragement enough to support us.

We have here the encouragement that "Wisdom is justified of her children." However many may reject the counsel of God to their ruin, the faithful, persevering, and prayerful preaching of the gospel, does not prove in vain with all. There are still some who consider it as worthy of all acceptance, who give us credit for our motives, who value our labours, and to whom we are "the saviour of life unto life." To the perverse and obstinate, the preaching of Christ crucified is a stumbling-block and foolishness; but to them who are saved, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."

Finally. This parable contains much *instruction to you who are hearers of the word*. Is not the fact of the general rejection of the gospel truly awful and awakening? and would it not be right for you to consider it in relation to yourselves? When you know that many a man resists all the means that are tried with him, would it not be well for each of you to ask, and to ask with deep concern and godly jealousy, "Lord, is it I?"

See here, you who put away from you the word of life which is spoken by our lips, see here the true cause of your doing so. You may attempt to shift the blame on us; but surely you ought still more to blame yourselves. You may talk of our errors and weaknesses; and it is possible that you may even speak against us for some things for which we ought rather to be commended: but, be this as it may, there is enough of truth

proclaimed here to save you if you embrace it, and to condemn you if you reject it. Look into your own hearts, then, and look to the depravity which reigns there, for the chief cause of your criminal resistance. Your perverseness, be persuaded, is inexcusable. One method after another is trying with you ; and yet it seems that nothing will please you, so as to induce you to receive the truth in the love of it. Well, then, what do you really suppose will be the end of this? If nothing will disarm your prejudice, if nothing will remove your dislike, if nothing will suit you, if nothing will satisfy you, if nothing will prevail with you—if neither providences nor ordinances will affect you—if you will hearken neither to the voice of reason, nor to the voice of conscience, nor to the voice of God—if neither the gentle will win, nor the terrible alarm you—if neither duty, nor interest, nor gratitude, nor hope, nor fear, nor the threatenings of an offended God, nor the invitations of a dying Redeemer, will effectually move you: what more can be attempted? and what must the end of this be? Do consider well your situation. Reflect on the desperate course you are pursuing; and endeavour, by the help of God, to lay aside your prejudices, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save your souls.

Happy are those of you who are blessed with a favourable disposition, not only towards the messengers, but towards the message itself. Carefully cultivate that attentive and teachable spirit, and seek to profit by every opportunity of hearing the word. We cannot ask you to be indulgent to decided error and sin; but surely, we may ask you to overlook the peculiarities and imperfections of those who are but men. Receive the word with all readiness of mind. Yield up your souls to the impressions which the various subjects treated are calculated to make. Receive every scriptural representation with cheerfulness, interest, faith, and love; and implore the divine blessing on all our engagements. Thus, instead of being fastidious, uncomfortable, and unimpressed, when attending our ministrations, you will be pleased, and happy, and edified. Instead of the counsel of God being rejected by you, to your ruin, heavenly wisdom will be justified by you, in the enlightened approbation of your understandings, in the affectionate reception of your hearts, in the cheerful commendation of your lips, and in the steady obedience of your lives. And thus, though the treasure of the gospel is in earthen vessels, you will find, to your present comfort, and eternal happiness, that the excellency of the power is of God.

LECTURE XXXVII.

LUKE VII. 36-50.

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. 37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, 38. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39. Now when the Pharisee, which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? 43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most: And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time that I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47. Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

THOUGH similar in some of its circumstances, the case here recorded is carefully to be distinguished from that which is related by Matthew, Mark, and John, and which is fixed by John, at the beginning of his twelfth chapter, as having taken place only six days before the passover at which our Lord was crucified, and not in any city, but in the village of Bethany. In that case the person who manifested her attachment to Jesus by anointing (as it appears from the harmony of the three evangelists) both his head and his feet, was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus—a woman who bore an excellent character, and who was before known as a believer in Christ, and as an object of his love. The coincidence, in both cases, of the name of Simon, which was a very common name among the Jews, is no proof that the cases were the same, any more than the coincidence of the name John, or James, or any other common name, would be with us. Luke is the only one of the evangelists, then, who relates this most beautiful and instructive occurrence. It is probably introduced by him in the order of time; at all events, it is naturally connected with what he has mentioned just before. Our Lord had said, that though the men of that generation were

displeased with the austere habits of his forerunner, they were equally dissatisfied with his own habits. "He came eating and drinking," like others, and they said: "Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Now, the passage before us furnishes an example of his sharing offered hospitality, of his carefully improving the opportunity, however, for the advancement of the cause that brought him into the world, and of the holy and blessed sense in which he was the friend of sinners.

We cannot be certain as to the motives which induced this Pharisee, whose name was Simon, to invite our Lord to his house. It is plain, indeed, that he was not influenced by faith or love. There is not sufficient reason to think that he was actuated by the base desire of entangling and betraying him; there seems at least some reason to suppose that he was influenced by curiosity, or by a desire to have under his roof one who was now attracting so much notice in the world. It is not for such reasons as these that we should desire to have Christ, so to speak, or any of the friends of Christ, or the form of the religion of Christ, in our dwellings. It is not when it is for the purpose of gratifying idle curiosity, or vain display, but it is only when it is from faith and love, that any such mark of attention can be considered as truly pious. As to the idea of exposing the Lord, or his cause, or his people, under the mask of hospitality, or any other pretended kindness, be such profanity far from us.

But, whatever may have been the object of the Pharisee, our Lord condescendingly and candidly accepted his invitation, resolved, of course, to improve the visit to the utmost, and aware of the excellent opportunity which would present itself. "*He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat*" along with other guests. As he thus sat, or reclined, at meat, and as all the company were, no doubt, carefully watching all he said and did, "*behold*" there entered "*a woman in the city, which was a sinner.*" It is not certain what city is here meant; perhaps it was Jerusalem, though Nain is the last city mentioned by the evangelist. We are not told what was the woman's name, nor have we any more particulars of her history than what are given in this passage. It is said of her that she was "a sinner." In one sense, every mere human being is a sinner. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." "Who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?" Nay, all by nature are under the guilt and power of sin. Sometimes, however, the word is used emphatically, to denote a notorious transgressor—one very much given up to actual sin. Thus, "As is the good, so is the sinner: and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath."—"He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul alive."—"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?" In this emphatical sense the word is plainly used here.

She was a woman of an abandoned character. She *was* so—that is, she had been so: for however short the time may have been since she had undergone a change, now at least, she was a converted person. Let us proceed to notice some of the *evidences of her conversion*.

And, first, her coming forward at all in this way, was a strong evidence of her conversion, as it was *an open and courageous profession* of her having turned from the paths of vice to the faith and obedience of Christ. She did not go to him by night, or when he was by himself in some place of retirement; but she went to him in the face of day, and in the presence of many witnesses. Ashamed of what she had once been, she was not ashamed of what she had now become. Her character had been notoriously bad, and yet she has the courage to show herself in this way: not as glorying in her shame, but as resolute in her determination to do away the scandal she had given, and to acknowledge Jesus as her Saviour. She had reason to apprehend that the Pharisee, with the applause of all like minded with himself, would turn her out of his house, with disdain; and yet she had the courage to enter, and to come forward. Urged on by a noble spirit of decision, she braved every difficulty; and in so doing, acted as if she had said: “I heard that he was in this house, even he to whom I am indebted for peace and hope. Though most unworthy, I will yet venture nigh. It may seem strange that such a one as I should confess him; but confess him I will. Let who will frown, nothing shall prevent me from throwing myself at his feet.”

Let us mark, in this, one characteristic which ought much to distinguish, and which, more or less, does distinguish every real convert—a profession of religion. There may be some shyness in some instances, but there cannot be an absolute denial, or a continual keeping back: nay, there will be, in some way or other, a distinct recognition of the obligation, and an explicit avowal of the feeling of Christian principle. The exact mode in which this woman proceeded, was nearly peculiar to herself; but the feeling which urged her forward is common to every true disciple of Christ, and will manifest itself in some form. “Whosoever shall confess me before men,” says he, “him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

2. Another evidence of this woman's conversion was her *humility*. Though bold enough to come forward to confess her Lord, she was not lifted up with pride. Her lowly spirit manifested itself in the most lowly actions. She approached in the humblest manner; and, far from seeking ambitiously to attract notice, “*stood at his feet behind him, and began to wash his feet.*” The position which persons then adopted at meals, and which is still common in Eastern countries, accounts for what we here read. They used a low table, at which they did not sit on chairs,

but reclined on couches, leaning often on one elbow; and thus their feet were extended somewhat behind them. And now, as was very common in that warm country, our Lord had put off his sandals. This woman, therefore, could easily proceed as she did, without any breach of propriety, and without inconvenience to Christ, or any of the company. Now, it must be observed that the action of washing the feet of another, was a menial service, and therefore a strong proof of humility. Thus,* when the servants of David came to Abigail, she adopted the following way of expressing her humility: "She arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be as a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord."

And so it is in every case of true conversion to God. An open change of conduct, and a courageous profession, are accompanied with genuine humility. The convert feels himself unworthy to come before the face of the Saviour: he is like the woman with the issue of blood, who "came behind" our Lord, "and touched the hem of his garment," saying, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be made whole." Let every true disciple, then, cherish this union of humility with boldness.

3. This woman's deep *contrition* was another evidence of her conversion. She not only stood at Christ's feet behind him, but she stood there "*weeping*:" she not only washed his feet, but she washed them with her "*tears*." She shed such a flood of tears, as, falling on his feet, might be said to bathe them. What an expression of her godly sorrow! She had been a great sinner, and she is now a great penitent.

And this contrition is characteristic of every true penitent; if it do not always display itself in tears, it, at least, is always felt at the heart. "Mine iniquities are gone over my head," says the Psalmist; "as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me."—"I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin." Such contrition is well pleasing to the Lord. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." God grant that we may all know what it is to have this sorrow for sin—not the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, but godly sorrow, that worketh repentance unto salvation. May we, like this woman, "look on Him whom we have pierced, and mourn!"

4. *The love to Christ* which this woman now displayed, was also a satisfactory proof of her conversion. Her whole conduct, in this transaction, was very demonstrative of this grace, as well as of humility and contrition,† but the remaining circumstances were especially so. She "*wiped his feet with*" the tresses of "*her hair*," which she wore long and loose on her shoulders,

* 1 Sam. xxv. 41.

† It is mentioned, in the 15th book of Polybius, that the Carthaginian ambassadors, in token of humiliation and entreaty, prostrated themselves on the ground and kissed the feet of the members of the council. In Xenophon (Cyp., lib. vii.) it is stated that certain persons kissed the feet of Cyrus, and wept for joy. In the 9th book of Polybius,

and which she here used instead of a towel. She also "*kissed his feet.*" And having brought "*a box,*" or small vessel, made of "*alabaster,*" or soft, white marble, full of costly, perfumed "*ointment,*" she "*anointed his feet*" with it. It is difficult to conceive stronger expressions of reverential attachment.

So, every true disciple of Christ is animated with similar affection. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" said our Lord to Peter. "Lord," replied he, "thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." And so, according to the opportunities afforded them, and the circumstances in which they are placed, all his disciples outwardly manifest their regard for him by various acts of devotedness, some of them of a costly nature, but especially by the holy and obedient tenor of their lives.

In this most affecting manner did the penitent conduct herself; and it might have been expected that her conduct would have given pleasure to all who beheld it; but it was not so. "*When the Pharisee who had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.*"

As to the idea that Jesus was no prophet—not to adduce any other argument, that idea was immediately and completely refuted by the perfect knowledge he displayed of what was passing in the Pharisee's mind. Our Lord manifested a similar knowledge of the human heart on various occasions. John makes this general assertion, with regard to him: "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." Let us ever keep this in mind; and let us feel that it would be altogether in vain for us to attempt to impose on Him who "searcheth the reins and hearts."

As to the discovery which this exposure of the inward sentiments of the Pharisee made of his own character, it showed him to be a proud and self-righteous man. He evidently considered himself as a most excellent person, in comparison of this poor woman, and as one who would have been utterly contaminated by her touch. He felt like the Pharisee in the parable spoken, to convict those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Such a spirit, let us all remember, is most offensive to God. Thus saith the Lord: "Those who say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." There was here, too, an inexcusable want of consideration as to what the office of a prophet and Saviour implied, and the condition of a sinner required: for nothing can be more reasonable than the defence our Lord made of his re-

it is said that when Hannibal approached Rome, the Roman ladies went to the temples, and supplicated the gods, "washing the pavement of the temples with their hair," as their custom was on such occasions: *πλυνουσαι ταις πομαις τα των ιερων ιδαφη· τουτο γαρ ιδος ιστι*—.

Sternitur et pedibus crebro pavida oscula figens.—Sil. Ital., lib. xi.

ception of sinners, and the view he gave of the end of his mission, on another occasion: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The Pharisee thus appears to have also cherished a very unlovely temper towards the reclaimed transgressor. He, very unnecessarily and unkindly, kept up the remembrance of her misdeeds, dwelling with satisfaction upon them, making no allowance for altered circumstances, and being unwilling to suppose that any real change had taken place in her. It is true that he did not audibly express his sentiments; but, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he:" and it is likely that, had not our Lord begun to speak, the Pharisee would soon have spoken out what he thought. Now, we have here a lesson how we should esteem and treat penitent and reformed offenders. Instead of being unreasonably suspicious of them, and thinking it almost impossible that they should ever become better, we ought to be ready to be convinced, by credible proofs, of their reformation: and instead of upbraiding them for what is past, and for what they have been brought to abhor, we ought studiously to avoid touching on what could now only pain, and not edify them; and we should do what we can to keep them from despair, and to welcome them to the paths of virtue. With regard to the scandalous but reclaimed transgressor among the Corinthians, the apostle gives these directions, which may be considered as furnishing a rule in similar cases: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment" (the punishment of rebuke and excommunication), "which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him."

Let us now consider the reply which our Lord gave to these mental objections of the Pharisee, in the way of preparing for a direct and strong approbation of the woman's procedure, on this occasion. "*And Jesus answering,*" that is, answering to suspicions secretly entertained, "*said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.*" And, whatever he said must be important, and worthy of our most serious consideration. On this, Simon, styling him "*Master,*" or Teacher, probably either hypocritically, or with somewhat of a sneer, bade him "*Say on,*" for he was ready to listen. Simon, and doubtless all the company, being attentive to hear, Our Lord spake this parable: "*There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence*" (or Roman denarii, in value about sevenpence halfpenny of our money each), "*the other fifty.*" These sums are fixed on merely on account of there being a considerable difference between them. "*And when they had nothing to pay, he freely forgave them both.*" Both of them might well be supposed to be grateful to their generous benefactor; but, said our Lord: "*Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?*" Simon answered and said,

I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." The literal sense of this parable is too plain to require any illustration.

But, in applying this parable spiritually, it may be remarked, first, that the Lord God himself is the creditor, and sinners of mankind are the debtors. They owe to God a debt of obedience; and, having failed to pay that, they owe to him a debt of punishment. Their sins are, indeed, called their debts: "Forgive us our debts." Again, though all are debtors, or sinners, some are more deeply in debt, are greater sinners, than others. One owes five hundred pence, another fifty. There are many aggravations of crime. "Therefore," said our Lord, "he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin"—greater than it would have been in other circumstances. And so, there are different degrees of punishment for impenitent sinners; some being beaten with many stripes, and others with few.—Further, we are here taught, and it will be well for us all to pay attention to the lesson, that no spiritual debtor, no sinner, can pay any part of the debt, or make satisfaction for any of his sins. A man may think himself a less heinous transgressor than some others, and he may actually be so; but let him beware of imagining that this will free him in the sight of God, or that his guilt is small, or that he can himself do or suffer anything to deliver himself from guilt. As a man's not contracting a new debt does not pay off an old debt; so, even perfect obedience itself, were it possible for a sinner to render such obedience hereafter, which it is not, would still leave him under the guilt of sin. From this it follows, as indeed it is here plainly taught, that if forgiveness is to come to us at all, it must come freely. Any other opinion is in itself absurd, and is, when expressed in words, a contradiction in terms. Forgiveness is of God; it is for Christ's sake; and it is by faith: that is, it is received as a gift, and not merited. Those who are justified, are "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."—And this parable teaches us, once more, not only that forgiveness, and especially a sense of forgiveness, will draw forth love, but that love will be in proportion to the greatness of the sin forgiven, or rather, to the view which the person entertains of its greatness. The blindness and pride of some, lead them to imagine that their guilt is small, when it is very great; whereas those convictions of sin which are produced by the Spirit of God, and which end in forgiveness, invariably cause men to look on themselves as very great sinners; and when persons thus deeply convinced are forgiven, and brought to a comfortable sense of forgiveness, their joy, gratitude, love, and devotedness, are great in proportion to their former contrition, and the greatness of their deliverance. Of this the apostle Paul was a remarkable example: "I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained

mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." And, under a strong sense of the love which had been shown to him, he immediately adds: "Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Having spoken this parable, the application of which to the case of the penitent woman was so obvious, that the Pharisee himself must, in some degree, have made it in his own mind, and having approved of the Pharisee's answer, our Lord proceeded actually to apply the principle of the parable to the case in hand: and this he did in the most beautiful manner. He "*turned*" round "*towards the woman,*" who was standing behind him, "*and he said to Simon, Seest thou this woman?*"—observe the respect and tenderness of affection she has shown to me, and contrast thine own conduct with that of her whom thou despisest. "*I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet.*" To present water to guests for washing their feet when they arrived, and especially if they had come from any considerable distance, was the ordinary, proper, and agreeable custom in these warm countries. It was thus, as we read in the 18th and 19th chapters of Genesis, that the angels were entertained by Abraham and Lot. "Peace be with thee," said the old man of Gibeah to the wayfaring Levite;* "*howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.*" So also, in writing to Timothy,† concerning the good qualifications of a widow, the apostle says, "If she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet." In this case, then, our Lord met with either intentional or inconsiderate neglect. This negligence, however, the humble penitent supplied. "*Thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.*"

"*Thou gavest me no kiss.*" This was a common form of salutation in these countries, as appears from the meeting of Jacob and Esau, of David and Barzillai, and of Judas and Christ. This customary mark of regard the Pharisee now neglected; but the penitent attended to it. "Thou gavest me no kiss"—thou didst not show the usual civility of kissing my face; "*but this woman, since the time I came in*" (or as some copies have it, Since the time *she* came in) "*hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*"

"*Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint.*" The use of oil (generally olive oil, as the original word here primitively sig-

* Judg. xix. 20.

† 1 Tim. v. 10.

nifies), to anoint the body, and particularly the hair, was very common in these countries, as it is still ; and it appears to have been often adopted at feasts. Thus the Psalmist, in the 23d Psalm, describes the goodness of God to him, by allusions to the customs at an entertainment, "Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over." Here, then, appears to have been another omission, which this penitent more than supplied. "Mine head with oil,"* even with common oil, "thou didst not anoint : *but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment*"†—precious and richly perfumed ointment.

From all these circumstances, we may remark, that according to their ability and station, Christians ought to attend to the usual and reasonable marks of civility and kindness to their guests. Paul exhorts, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares ;" and Peter, "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging."

But, to notice what remains of this history, our Lord said further to Simon : "*Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much.*" To suppose that the affectionate conduct of the woman was the reason why she was forgiven, would be to forget the whole gospel scheme of acceptance, and is by no means what this passage implies. The "wherefore" and the "for," are here used to connect the love of this woman to Christ with her forgiveness, not as the meritorious, nor even as the instrumental cause, but as the evidence of her being pardoned. This is plain from the concluding clause of the verse : "*But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*" The sentiment which would be the contrast to this, is, that to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much.

After this, our Lord, addressing himself to the woman, said expressly : "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" No doubt, these gracious words would come home with delightful efficacy to the heart of the penitent ; and she would forthwith experience, even in a higher degree than before, the blessedness of the person whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. Is any one here ready to say : "What would I not give to hear the same words addressed to me ?" To him we would say : Let him get into the situation of this woman at the time here referred to ; let him repent and believe the gospel ; let him cherish the feeling, and evidence the reality of love to the Saviour ; and then may he, and ought he, and, in a good measure, will he, hear, not the audible voice, but the written word of his Lord, saying, to him "Thy sins are forgiven."

Instead of being delighted with this most gracious declaration of Jesus, the company were offended ; as if it argued a presumptuous usurpation of the divine prerogative : "*They that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that*

* ἰλαίω.

† μυρώ.

forgiveth" (or pretendeth to forgive) "*sins also?*" So it was in the case of the paralytic.* Our Lord said to him, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." But "the scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God alone?" Our Lord then proved by the miracle of healing, that he was God, and had power, on earth, to forgive sin. On this occasion, far from retracting his declaration, he repeated it in another form, and in a most solemn manner. "*He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*" That she did indeed believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest her hope on him, was clear from the whole of her conduct at this time. Now, observe here the honour which he puts on her faith. She manifested many other graces, particularly, an open and courageous profession, great humility, deep contrition, and ardent love; but none of these, nor all of them together, saved her. It was her faith alone that saved her. And how did it save her? Not as God saved her by divine agency; nor as Christ saved her by merit; but by its instrumentality, as it was the means by which she was connected with Christ, and obtained an interest in him. Thus also, he said to the woman with the issue of blood: "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." And so it is in every case of salvation. Let us remember the declaration of the Apostle: "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." No doubt, the woman left the Pharisee's house in peace—in peace of conscience, the God of hope filling her with all joy and peace in believing. And so it is also, in some measure, with all who are saved by faith. "Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

And now, my friends, this history is not destitute of admonition to those of you who are no longer sinners in the strongest sense of the word, but who believe and obey the truth. While it reminds you to be thankful that you are delivered from the dominion of sin, it nevertheless calls you to the renewed exercise of penitence, faith, and love. Seek for more heart-affecting views of the remains of iniquity which still lurk within you, and which still, more or less, mark your path. Great humility, and deep contrition, are still becoming and necessary in you. So far is the free pardoning mercy of your God from being any reason why you should think lightly of your sins, that it is the strongest of all reasons why you should bewail them before him, even after he has pardoned you, and received you into the bond of his covenant, and given you peace. Thus saith the Lord: "I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy

* See Matt. ix., Luke v.

shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Faith is also still as necessary for you as ever. God has freely forgiven you a great debt, it is true; but you are, from time to time, contracting new debt: and therefore, if you were to cease to trust in Christ, you would even yet be undone. Study to live, then, in the habitual exercise of the grace of faith. Nay, seek, in the way of a more firm and more simple reliance on the Redeemer, a more firm and more joyful assurance that your sins are forgiven. Seek this assurance, also, in the way of the inward and outward workings of the grace of love. Think how little you love, considering how much you have been forgiven. Pray that the love of God may be more and more shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto you. Meditate much on your many and great obligations. Say, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us?" Confess him, praise him, exalt him, obey him. Let the "love of Christ constrain you, because you thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that you who live, should not henceforth live unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you, and rose again."

But this history is still more directly and more affectingly applicable to those of you who are sinners, in the emphatical sense of the word; and especially if you are beginning to feel the burden of your sins, and to have some desire to return to the Lord. If, as is possible may be the case with some of you, you are gross offenders, and leading very immoral lives, you must see at once the remarkable suitableness of the case to yours. But if, as is doubtless the case with some of you, you are more decent externally, and yet decidedly unbelieving, and impenitent, and careless, you too are great sinners in the sight of God, and you must appear so in your own eyes, if you are under any spiritual conviction: to you also, therefore, this case is very suitable. How dreadfully dangerous is your situation, O sinners! "The end of these things is death."—"Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." It is well if you are touched with a sense of your depravity and danger. Yet pass not from the extreme of profligacy, or carelessness, to the extreme of despair. Such a transition is not uncommon. Beware of it. Consider this example well. Can anything be more certain than that, as this woman was forgiven, and blessed with peace, so will you, if you apply in the same way to the same gracious Redeemer? Consider also the example of some of the Corinthians:—having mentioned fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, and other transgressors, Paul adds: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Do not, then, give way to the fear that, if you apply, you will be rejected. It is likely enough, indeed, that some persons may upbraid you.

Worldly men, the very men by whom, or by the like of whom, you were deceived, and betrayed, or, at least, encouraged to evil, or men who have no just estimate of the value of your souls, or men who are pharisaical and self-righteous, will, when you forsake the way of death, feel a mean pleasure in recalling your offences, and express a contemptuous astonishment at your change: but let the reproaches of such men sit very light upon you. Jesus Christ will not reproach you, he will not upbraid you: that you may be sure of from this history. Our heavenly Father will not upbraid you, nor mention what you have done. Thus saith the Lord: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Their sins, "though sought for, shall not be found." Neither will those of your own race, who are best able to judge in such a case, upbraid you. You will find some, who, instead of reproaching you, will rejoice at your return, namely, those who have imbibed the spirit of Jesus. Their maxim is, "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this our brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Be advised, then, to follow out your convictions fully, and in a way that leads to the faith, and admits the hope of the gospel. Say, each of you: "Lord, I come to thee, miserable offender as I am; but by thy grace, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more."—"Seek the Lord while he is to be found; call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon." Unbelief will suggest a thousand difficulties, and a thousand fears; but do you resolve, by God's help, to overcome them all. Let none of you say, There is no hope for me—I have committed unpardonable sin—I am already finally rejected—I am lost beyond redemption. Think of the case of this woman. Think, especially, of what God has done, and is ready to do, for you. Has he not spared you that you may turn? Has he not given his Son to die for you? Is not the blood of his Son sufficient to cleanse from all sin? Does not his Spirit wait to help you?—Lo, he is now ready to receive you, and he is inviting you to draw nigh. Break through every difficulty, then; and let nothing prevent you from throwing yourself at his feet. Then "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—"Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as a dove, whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

LECTURE XXXVIII.

LUKE VIII. 1-3.

"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him. 2. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils. 3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."

PREACHING was the great work which our Lord had to perform in discharging his public ministry. To this his miracles, however numerous and important, were subservient, as they were chiefly intended to prepare the way for its success, by awakening public attention, and demonstrating the truth of what he taught. Accordingly, his evangelist, having told what Jesus said and did in one place, proceeds to say: "*And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village preaching.*" He did not confine himself to one spot; but he itinerated through the country, that the benefit of his labours might be as extensively diffused as possible. We saw, on a former occasion,* that when the inhabitants of a certain district endeavoured to "stay him, that he should not depart from them, he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee." The chief cities attracted a considerable share of his attention; for, in such it is that the most numerous audiences are to be expected: but he did not neglect the numerous villages; for, every soul is precious, and by him "the poor had the gospel preached unto them." In like manner, preaching is the great, the most important work of those who are appointed to the office of the sacred ministry; and they ought to imitate their Master in its diligent and zealous exercise, though, no doubt, always according to what propriety and utility may require, in the various circumstances of the world. Not only reason suggests, but Scripture, in the gradually more and more settling habits of the apostles, points out, that on the introduction of Christianity into any country by one labourer, or a few labourers, it is proper to sow the seed of the word as extensively as can be done with the probability of its taking any root: whereas, in a country in which Christianity is established, and labourers abound, and places of worship and other local advantages are provided, whatever exceptions may be allowed, the general rule is, that the work will be most effectually done by stated

* Luke iv. 43.

labourers, availing themselves of these advantages, avoiding all invidious interference with each other, and directing their energies each to an appropriate and manageable sphere.

Luke also informs us, in brief but very expressive terms, what was the grand subject of Christ's preaching: he preached, "*showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.*" He preached that the long-expected, and earnestly-desired kingdom, or reign of God, was come; and he preached this as involving the great doctrine of the gospel dispensation, that doctrine on account of which it obtained the name of gospel, or good news—the doctrine of the glad tidings of salvation to perishing sinners. In his ministry, his words by Isaiah were delightfully fulfilled: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And what is the chief aim of our preaching still, but to "show the glad tidings of the kingdom of God?" The message of the angel to the shepherds is our message to you: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Let me, then, ask you, in few but earnest words, Are these tidings indeed glad tidings to you? Think not, if you are indifferent to them, to justify that indifference by saying that they are nothing new to you, and that as you have heard them long ago, and innumerable times, it is no wonder that they cease to make any impression on you. If any of you received, some time ago, an account of any great worldly property falling to you, the novelty of the idea may now be nearly gone, but not so your estimation of the value of the inheritance. So, the truth is, that if you had ever received these good news of salvation as you ought, you could not, now that they are repeatedly brought into your mind, be thus habitually indifferent to them. In order that you may be brought to give a suitable reception to these tidings, consider well their vast import. It is here proclaimed that the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God has come into the world, and lived, and suffered, and died, to obtain for you forgiveness and life; and there is proposed, for your acceptance along with him, a free and complete salvation. Consider how much you stand in need of such a deliverance—how miserable you must be without it, and how happy if it shall become yours. But as no news of any kind, however important, can make any impression on you, unless they be believed as well as comprehended, so it is only in the way of faith that the gospel can interest and influence you. Consider, then, the evidence on which it rests: be aware of the natural disinclination of the human heart to yield to a system which would so effectually turn it from a spirit of aversion and disobedience to the love and service of God: and, remembering

that saving faith is the gift of God, pray that it may be "given to you in behalf of Christ to believe on his name." In this way, the gospel will come to you with refreshing and saving power; it will be good news to you indeed; and then, welcoming those who come to preach it, you will say: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

We are here further told, that as our Lord proceeded from place to place, preaching, "*the twelve were with him.*" In compliance with his wish, the apostles left their secular business, that they might accompany him in his progress, and attend on his preaching and miracles. The advantages of this were great. Thus they had an opportunity of hearing and seeing what was calculated to give them full information of his views, and to confirm their personal attachment to his cause. Thus, too, they became well qualified to go forth on their mission, as witnesses and teachers to others; and they were the more likely to be received, as having been often seen with Christ, and as being, therefore, believed to be in possession of his instructions and confidence. Accordingly, when a vacancy occurred in the apostleship, by the death of Judas, it was stated by Peter, and agreed to by the whole disciples assembled in Jerusalem, that no man was qualified to supply the vacancy, but one who had fully enjoyed these opportunities of accompanying Jesus Christ: "Of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

While the apostles were his stated and almost constant attendants, it appears that there were many other persons who were much with him: and Luke says that among these there were "*certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.*" Some of them had been cured of demoniacal possessions, and some of common diseases: and it is also certain that some of these had been healed of the disease of sin, and blessed with spiritual health and peace. No wonder that such persons felt a desire to be much with the Lord; to this they would be led, both by gratitude for what he had already done for them, and by a proper regard to their own continuance in bodily and spiritual health, and to their own enjoyment and improvement. And where should those of you who have experienced Christ's saving power desire to be, but where he is? Where can you be so well, so happily, so profitably employed, as in varied duty for his sake, as in following the footsteps of his flock, as in following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, as in listening to his voice—as in his ordinances, in his praise, at his footstool?

Of these female followers of our Lord, there are here named: and first, "*Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.*" It is quite clear, from the whole features of their history, that this was not that Mary who was the sister of Martha and Laza-

rus. As to the opinion of some, that Mary Magdalene was the penitent spoken of at the end of the foregoing chapter, it may possibly be correct, but there is not sufficient ground to assert it positively. To distinguish her from others of the same name, she was called Magdalene, or the Magdalene, in all probability from Magdala, the place of her birth, or residence. Magdala was a town in Galilee beyond Jordan. It is mentioned in Matthew, 15th chapter and last verse; Jesus "took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala." Thus, our Lord was called a Nazarene, or of Nazareth, because he resided in Nazareth. Out of this Mary "went seven devils." It appears that persons were sometimes possessed with many evil spirits at once. "My name is Legion," said an unclean spirit; "for we are many." It seems natural to understand this description of Mary Magdalene's case as intimating, first, a real dispossession, either of the exact number of evil spirits here specified, or of a very considerable number: seven being a number much in use, and often put as a certain for an uncertain number. In this view, it is evident that this woman had been greatly afflicted, and that a most important deliverance had been wrought out for her. Some are inclined to consider this description as intimating, also, that Mary Magdalene had been a very wicked woman: this may have been so, and this is not inconsistent with the idea of possession; on the contrary, evil spirits were likely to tempt to sin, as well as to torment, those who had fallen under their influence. We read of an unclean spirit returning, and "taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself;" and a very bad man is described, by Solomon, as having "seven abominations in his heart." In this view, then, as well as in the other, if such had been her character, the deliverance wrought out for her was unspeakably great, for, she was "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Her case furnishes an encouragement, in the former view, to the most afflicted person, not to despair of relief; and in the latter, to the most guilty, not to despair of mercy, on making application in the right way. Various other particulars are known of the history of Mary Magdalene, but we shall not notice them here, as an opportunity of adverting to the most remarkable of them will occur afterwards.

The second woman here named as following our Lord, is "*Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward.*" This woman (for, in all probability, the same person is meant) is mentioned on one other occasion, namely, in Luke xxiv. 10, as, along with others, informing the apostles of Christ's resurrection. The Herod here mentioned, was Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who beheaded John the Baptist. Chuza, not being elsewhere mentioned, we know nothing of his character: but as he was the steward, or principal household officer to one of Herod's dignity, he must have been a person of good income, and of much consideration. His wife, therefore, must have been a

woman of note.—The Lord has his people in all stations of life. It is true that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called:” nevertheless, divine grace has raised up some eminent patterns of religion in high stations. Joseph feared God, though he was governor over all the land of Egypt. Daniel, who was made the first of the three presidents over Chaldea, was eminently faithful, and called by God, “a man greatly beloved.” David, king of Israel, was a man of fervent piety. The nobleman, whose son Jesus healed,* “believed, and his whole house.” Manaen, mentioned at the beginning of the 13th chapter of the Acts, who had been brought up, or educated, along with Herod the tetrarch, had, probably, renounced inviting worldly prospects for conscience’ sake.† At a very early period, too, genuine Christianity had made its way into the first house in the world, the palace of the Roman emperor; for we read of “the saints of Cesar’s household.” Now, though there is no respect of persons with God, and the soul of the lowliest immortal is of more value than the world; yet, in so far as the probable effect on others is concerned, there is peculiar reason to rejoice, when persons of rank, or property, or learning, or influence, are brought over to the Lord’s side; for thus, those means which tend, under the divine blessing, to promote the further success of religion, are much increased. It may here also be remarked, that religion does not destroy the distinctions of rank, and, therefore, that the believer, of a superior station, is called on to be condescending without meanness, and humble without vulgarity; and the believer of a lower walk of life ought to feel Christian love towards Christians above him, without improperly presuming on their humility, or forgetting what is due to them and becoming in himself. On this subject, Paul thus writes to Timothy: “Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.”

“*Susanna*,” the other woman named by the evangelist, is nowhere else mentioned; and we, therefore, know not a single circumstance about her, except what we gather from this passage. But what is here recorded is quite sufficient to prove that she loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and to keep alive for her an honourable memory in the Church, through all generations.—There are many saints, who are merely named in Scripture, and nothing more: even this is a high honour. Only a very small proportion, however, of the people of God have had, or can have, their names transmitted to permanent remembrance on earth, in any way: and, indeed, however natural it may be to desire something of this kind, no true believer need much regret the

* John iv. 46.

† Acts xvii. 4. 12.—Chief women at Thessalonica and Berea.

want of it. Here a man generally has his circle of friends, though it may be a very small one, to whom his existence is important, and by whom he is beloved: but he cannot remain in that circle, nor can they continue to think or speak of him. The tears which flowed at his death will be soon dried up; nay, it will not be long ere the eyes that shed them become as dark as his own. In process of time, his name will cease to be mentioned, and it will be forgotten where his body was buried; and after a few generations, no inhabitant of the earth will have any knowledge that such a man ever existed. Ah! poor human nature. Alas for the pride of man! How are they to be pitied who have no better hope of immortality than can be furnished by such a vain world as this! Not so the believer. It is true that he may not be talked of by men on earth, neither shall he have any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun: but his remembrance shall not be utterly gone, nor his memorial perish for ever; for to his Saviour his name belongs, to his God his dust is dear: his record is on high, and in the estimation of all right-thinking and holy beings, in a now unseen world, he shall be in everlasting remembrance.

Besides these three who are named, Luke says there were "*many others*"—that is, many other women—who followed Jesus, and "*ministered unto him of their substance.*" They contributed money, victuals, and the like, to supply the necessities of Christ and his disciples.—How great the condescension of the Son of God, who, though eternally and infinitely rich, became poor, and accepted assistance from the creatures of his own hand! Let this reconcile his people to any privations to which they may be exposed, and teach them not to be disconsolate, or ashamed, if, from necessity, they are reduced to be indebted to their fellow-creatures for help. Taking even the lowest view of the work in which Jesus was engaged, this assistance was absolutely due to him, for, "the labourer is worthy of his hire;" and taking even the lowest view of what, in this case, was calculated to elicit the sensibilities of the heart, these sensibilities could not here have been withheld: but, ordinary rules of judging, ordinary ideas of obligation, and ordinary principles of feeling, seem to come altogether short of such a case as this. What must it have been for these pious persons, who had been healed and saved by his grace and power, to have ministered unto Jesus of their substance! While the more opulent of them would rejoice to contribute largely to his support, the poorest of them would be delighted to have an opportunity of showing him, though it were but the smallest token of regard. Happy opportunity, desirable honour, blessed privilege, of being permitted to minister to the Saviour of sinners, the Lord of glory! In this respect, females appear to have been blessed, beyond persons of the other sex.

On this short passage, so honourable to these women, it may be remarked, First, *That the female sex are peculiarly disposed and*

qualified to sympathize with, and relieve, the troubles which are incident to humanity. It is no empty compliment to human vanity, but it is the truth, to the encouragement of well-doing, and to the praise of the great Creator, to say, that to commend these women for this conduct is just to pronounce the eulogy of their sex, of whom similar kindness is, generally speaking, characteristic. The wisdom and goodness of God, providing for the security and happiness of our race, are conspicuous in the difference between the leading character and disposition of the two sexes. Man is fitted to engage in hard labour, deep study, and public and arduous business, with great strength, intense thought, and the utmost perseverance: and it is his praise to preserve an undaunted spirit, even amid the assaults of an enemy, and in the rage of battle. Woman is possessed of a heart which most readily feels for the distressed, and prompts her to do everything she can to relieve them. Her attention to the afflicted is most tender and unwearied; and there is something in the very manner of her doing a kind action, which a man cannot equal. The following passage, from a celebrated and interesting traveller* in Africa, furnishes a beautiful confirmation of this remark; and he had good reason to know, for he was long and repeatedly exposed a helpless wanderer, to the danger of being murdered by savages, and of dying of hunger, thirst, disease, and fatigue. "Among the men," says he, "my reception, though generally kind, was sometimes otherwise. The hardness of avarice in some, and the blindness of bigotry in others, had closed up the avenues of compassion: but I do not recollect a single instance of hard-heartedness to me in the women. In all my wanderings and wretchedness, I found them uniformly kind and compassionate; and I can truly say, as a predecessor† has eloquently said before me, To a woman I never addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. If I was hungry or thirsty, wet or sick, they did not hesitate, like the men, to perform a generous action. In so free and so kind a manner did they contribute to my relief, that if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught, and if hungry, I ate the coarsest morsel, with a double relish." This is praise as just as it is elegant. To this, however, it is proper to add, how much more valuable still this natural kindness becomes, when it is engrafted on Christian principle; for then its root is firm, and its fruit not only refreshing to the weary, but spiritually good, and acceptable to God. Let them think well of this, the true, the finest ornament of their sex. Let them remember that it is with such good works as these that all women, and especially women professing godliness, should adorn themselves.

Secondly, This passage suggests the encouraging and edifying twofold remark, that the *woman holds a very distinguished place throughout the history of redemption, and that there are many*

* Park.

† Mr. Ledyard.

things there recorded of her for an example. Though the weaker vessel, great honour comes to her here. If sin was introduced into the world by the woman, He who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, was "the Seed of the woman." So also, women were much concerned in the various steps which preceded, accompanied, and immediately followed, the appearance of Messiah, and the actual accomplishment of redemption. In proof of the important part they acted before redemption was achieved, it may be enough to name Sarah, Elisabeth, Anna, and especially the Virgin Mary. During our Lord's sojourning on earth, females manifested towards him many extraordinary instances of devoted attachment. To them, chiefly, as we see from this passage, was allotted the pleasant and honourable duty of supplying his temporal necessities. It was a woman who, from the midst of a crowd, magnified the Redeemer, by exclaiming, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." His female converts accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem, still continuing, no doubt, their ministrations, when the hour of his passion was approaching; and they continued to stand by him, when the men forsook him and fled. They followed him, bewailing and lamenting him, as he was led forth to Calvary. They remained, in all the agony of sympathetic distress, when the bloody scene of his crucifixion was perpetrating. In the words of John,* "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." And, in the words of Matthew.† "Many women were there beholding afar off, who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children." Great was the regard they showed, even to his lifeless body; for Luke tells us, that when Joseph of Arimathea discharged the pious duty of burying it, "the women who came with Jesus from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment."‡ Very early, the next morning, on the first day of the week, they returned to the sepulchre, bringing the spices, with the view of applying them to the body. Thus it was, that they had the honour of first knowing of the Saviour's resurrection: for they found the stone rolled away; they entered in, and found not the body; and they saw two angels in shining garments, who said to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It was by a woman that Jesus was first seen after his resurrection:§ "Now, when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." Then the women, according to the instruction of the angels, and as their own feelings would

* John xix. 25. † Matt. xxvii. 55. ‡ Luke xxiii. 55. § Mark xvi. 9.

prompt them, went and informed the twelve. The female disciples also manifested the same piety, and the same devotion to Christ's cause, after his ascension: for, after the list of the eleven apostles in the 1st chapter of the Acts, it is added: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." The place, then, which the woman occupies in the history of redemption, is very important.

Throughout the Word of God, too, there are many things recorded of females, in which they should be considered as patterns to their sex, according to the different circumstances in which they are placed. The faith of Sarah—the devotedness of Ruth—the humility of Abigail—the hospitality of the Shunammite—the patriotism of Esther—the penitence of the woman who was a sinner—the believing importunity of the woman of Canaan—the love of Mary of Bethany—the hearty reception of the gospel by Lydia—the almsdeeds of Dorcas—the kindness of Phebe, who was the succourer of many, and of Paul also—the courage of Priscilla, who, with her husband Aquila, laid down her neck for the apostle's life—the diligence of Tryphena and Tryphosa, and the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord—all these are traits of female character, well worthy of imitation.

But allow me, in the last place, to exhort and invite you all, of both sexes, according to the ability and opportunity given you, to *follow the example of the good women here mentioned, in ministering unto Christ*. This trait of character is by no means peculiar to them. It was a subject of prophecy which has often been fulfilled, that believers should offer to Messiah of their substance: "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." When the wise men of the East saw Christ, "they fell down, and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh:" and so these women contributed of their substance to his support. These, however, are but specimens of the conduct which all who know and love his name, are inclined to follow. Are not you, then, who have been spiritually healed by him, ready almost to envy these wise men and these good women of their opportunities of thus honouring him; if indeed the word envy can be at all used in a good sense? Are you not ready to say, What shall we render to him? how shall we minister to him? what shall we give him? what will he accept at our hands?

"Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom, and off'rings divine;
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?"

Begin with yielding up yourselves to him; or, if you say that you have done this already, then do it once more; nay, repeat the act of self-dedication again and again; and let it be a volun-

tary, a hearty, and an entire surrender. "Present your bodies," your own persons, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "This they did," said the apostle concerning the charitable contributions of the Corinthians, "not as we hoped,"—that is, even beyond our expectation,—"but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God." It is certain, however, that while you surrender yourselves to the Lord, it is also your duty to minister to him of your substance; and it is certain, also, that, though you may acknowledge the general obligation, it may be needful to stir you up, by way of remembrance and more full instruction, as to the way in which you should proceed, and the degree of liberality which you should exercise.

Though, then, you have it not in your power to minister to Christ now in his literal person, yet you may minister to him in his cause, and in his people. You are called on to minister to him in his cause. You will virtually minister to him, when you contribute to the support of the gospel where it is already established, or to its introduction into heathen and other unenlightened lands. You must be quite aware, too, of the direct, scriptural authority for asserting that you minister to Christ in giving of your substance to relieve his poor members. "The poor ye have always with you," said he, "but me ye have not always." And here, his words at the day of judgment are decisive, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And when the righteous shall begin to say, "Lord, when?" he shall answer, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Think of this, then, and surely you will feel it to be one of the most powerful and delightful motives to deeds of charity.

Now, let it not be thought that it is only the rich, and those who have much to spare, who are called on in this way to minister to Christ of their substance. I am sure the heart of the poor believer (I mean the comparatively poor, for as to those who are in absolute want, it is out of their power to give anything)—I am sure the heart of the poor believer will not seek shelter under so mean and unscriptural a subterfuge. To him, exemption from such ministrations would be anything but a privilege. The apostle, too, teaches that a man should "labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." But the scriptural rule is, that "every one should give according as God has prospered him." If, then, men should even labour with their hands, for the express purpose of being able to give, rather than have nothing to give, it is plain that those who are in easy, and espe-

cially those who are in very affluent circumstances, ought to be liberal in their ministrations. See, then, that you conscientiously attend to this duty. See, too, that in all your charities, you be indeed ministering to Christ, giving in obedience to his command, for his sake, and in a dependence on him for acceptance: for thus your charities will be, not pharisaical and self-righteous, but truly Christian deeds. Let the love of Christ constrain you to this habitual benevolence. "See that you abound in this grace also," to prove the sincerity of your love. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."—"Now, therefore, perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have."

LECTURE XXXIX.

LUKE VIII. 4-15.

“ And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5. A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. 8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. 11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

PASSAGES parallel to this are found in the 13th chapter of Matthew, and the 4th chapter of Mark, by both of which additional light is thrown on the subject. We shall first make a few observations on the more detached points of the harmonized accounts; and then open up the parable, under the four classes of hearers.

Luke informs us, that “ *much people were now gathered together, and were come to Christ out of every city.*” Now were fulfilled, in part, the words of the prophet, “ Unto Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be;” and now an admirable opportunity presented itself for his speaking to them, touching the things of his kingdom. It appears, from Matthew, that this parable was spoken on the same day on which several interesting circumstances took place, such as, his explaining who were his mother and brethren, or true friends, and his giving the sign of the prophet Jonas. It appears, too, both from Matthew and Mark, that, for the greater convenience, our Lord had now gone into a bark on the sea—that is, the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Genesaret; while the whole multitude stood on the shore; and that, on this occasion, he spoke many things to them in parables.

The word “parable,” properly signifies a comparison, a simile, or similitude. Not to particularize its gradations of meaning, it comes at last to be used, in the Gospels, for a considerably extended illustration of divine truth, under the form of a narrative; in which, however, though persons and occurrences are

spoken of, it is to be understood that our Lord does not refer to any individual persons who actually existed, or to any particular occurrences which actually took place (for that would be a history, and not a parable), but supposes a case likely to occur in common life, with the view of suggesting a similar train of spiritual instruction. Among the parables Jesus spoke at this time was the very edifying parable of the sower.

We are told, in the 9th verse, that "*his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?*" From the harmony of the three evangelists, however, we find that the disciples put two questions to our Lord at this time—the one was, the general question why he spoke in parables; and the other was what was the meaning of this parable, in particular. Luke gives the answer to both these questions, though he expressly sets down only one of them. When we remember the question, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" the words in the 10th verse come in quite naturally: "*And he said, Unto you it is given*" (or, according to Matthew, "Because it is given to you") "*to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*" Our Lord assigns a twofold reason for his speaking in parables—the one relating to the multitude, and more especially the obstinate part of them; and the other relating to his own disciples. With regard to the obstinate multitude, to whom the parables were chiefly addressed, the parabolic mode of instruction was adopted, partly by way of punishment, for, being somewhat dark, it served to hide the sentiment from them; and yet it was only in the case of those who were prejudiced and wilfully blind that it had this effect, for to the sincere inquirer it was rather an assistance. Thus it happened that many, according to the prediction of Isaiah, overlooked what they saw,* and did not comprehend what they heard. With regard to our Lord's own disciples; though the parabolic mode of teaching was not adopted chiefly on their account, yet it was well suited for their edification. Their docility, candour, and piety, and the divine assistance given them, rendered the general object of most of the parables intelligible. They were thus furnished with a key to them: and besides, when they were at a loss as to the meaning of any of them, they had an opportunity of asking Christ privately, when the multitude were gone away: and he failed not to give them all the explanation necessary. As to the second question, which is the only one of the two put down by Luke—the question what was the meaning of the particular parable of the sower—Christ replies to that, in what is contained from the 11th to the 15th verse, inclusive.

* Polybius thus speaks of some who, from unskilfulness, and a perverse way of judging, though they were present were absent, and did not see things which they were looking upon. Οὐ μὲν ἄλλα διότι γὰρ συμβαίνει διὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν καὶ κακουργίαν πολλοὺς ἰνὸς καθεστῆαι εἰς τοὺς παρόντας τροπὴν εἶναι μὴ παρῆναι καὶ ΒΛΕΠΟΝΤΑΣ ΜΗ ΒΛΕΠΕΙΝ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημίων γινώσκοντες καὶ τῶν Τιμαίων συμβεβηκότων γιγνέσθαι φανερὸν.

Let us now proceed to open up the parable : and this will be done, most satisfactorily, as well as in the shortest compass, by bringing forward into immediate comparison with the different branches of the parable itself, the corresponding clauses of the infallible exposition.

Verse 5 : “ *A sower went out to sow his seed.*” Verse 11 : “ *Now the parable is this ; The seed is the word of God.*”—The seed is an emblem of the word of God, of divine truth. God’s word may be compared to seed, as it is that which, received into the heart, becomes, through grace, a principle of spiritual life, improving and growing, till it becomes fruitful in every good word and work. In 1 Pet. i. 23, believers are described as “ born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The sowing of the seed is, of course, the preaching of the word. And, borrowing an illustration from the, in some respects, similar parable of the tares, we may say, in reference to this parable of the sower : “ He that soweth the seed is the Son of man ;” the chief sower, or preacher, is Jesus Christ. But, under him, all who preach the word may be considered as sowing this seed. In reference to the labours of preachers, our Lord says : “ One soweth and another reapeth ;” and the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians : “ We have sown unto you spiritual things.” Here, too, we may say : “ The field is the world,” or the human heart, or as many as come under the preaching of the word.

The general scope of the parable is to show the different effects of the preaching of the word—of the same preaching on different classes of hearers. It is the same sower who is here spoken of, as sowing the whole seed ; it is the same seed which is sown in every part of the field—not one kind of seed in one place, and another in another ; and the whole is sown, not at different seasons, but at the same season—at one going out, at one time : and yet the event is represented as different in four several ways. In like manner, on persons hearing the same preacher, and the same instructions at the same time the effect is very different ; some being properly impressed, and some not. Now, to what is this difference to be attributed ? In one view of the subject, the difference is to be attributed to the special influence of the Holy Spirit, without which all means prove in vain, but with which the humblest means prove effectual, and to which all success is ultimately to be ascribed : “ Paul may plant, and Apollos may water ; but it is God who giveth the increase.” This, however, is not the point to which this parable chiefly directs our attention : nor would it be reasonable, or scriptural, because of anything implied in the doctrines of divine influence, and universal human depravity, to overlook the specialities of each case—the circumstances which, in some individuals, have plainly a more immediate effect in preventing them from getting any good from the ministry of the word, and the circumstances which, in other individuals, are plainly more

immediately instrumental, under God, in producing the desired impression. It is these minute, yet important circumstances, which this parable places before us, in a way most discriminating and instructive. We shall only farther observe, on the parable in general, that the result is represented as being good, only in one of the four varieties. Without running the comparison too close, may we not from this infer that the proportion of those who derive saving benefit from the word is often very small; and ought not this painful fact to excite godly jealousy, and great searchings of heart, with regard to ourselves? But let us consider the four different classes of hearers, with the issue of each of their cases respectively.

First, *The way-side hearers.* As the sower sowed, "*some fell by the way-side: and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.*" Lying on the surface of the highway, trodden under foot by passengers, and picked up by the birds, it is plain that none of this part of the seed could take any root at all. We have the spiritual interpretation of this in the 12th verse: "*Those by the way-side are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*" The interpretation in Matthew,* is in these words: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the way-side." This is a description of that (it is to be feared) very numerous class of hearers, who are altogether careless, ignorant, and unimpressed. They come and hear, it is true. They do not entirely absent themselves from the public preaching of the word; that would perhaps displease their friends, or injure them in the opinion of the world, careless as it is, or distress their own consciences, far from tender as they are. There are but few among us who withdraw entirely from the sanctuary. The vast majority of this world, even the world that lieth in wickedness, and in the wicked one, have something that they call religion. Religion, such as it is, is a part of their system; they could not preserve any degree of self-complacency, they could not enjoy their sins and follies, they could not walk on at ease according to the course of this world, without a religion. The most worldly of the world, generally speaking, have their religion; it has a certain place in their habits; the entire want of it would be a painful blank even to them; they would be miserable without it. Of the religious part of their system, church-going is almost the whole. They occasionally, at least, perhaps regularly, go to church; they "come and hear:" and this is so far right. But this is all. They "do not understand." They do not understand what they hear; and, therefore, they do not believe it, nor obey it. This total failure of right comprehension arises, not from any unintelligibleness in the word, for its essentials are so plain, that he who runs may read, if he will only look; but from

* Matt. xiii. 19.

their own very criminal thoughtlessness and inattention. They do not regard, or mind, or consider, the word; and hence do not understand it; and so it makes no impression on them at all. Instead of bending their minds as they ought, with sincere desire and steady endeavour to what is preached, they are thinking of almost everything else—some of one thing, and others of another: their minds are wandering on the mountains of a thousand vanities. One is thinking of his farm, another of his merchandise—one of his debtors, another of his creditors—one of his friends, another of his enemies—one of an entertainment at home, another of a journey abroad—one of a new dress, another of a pleasant company—one of building a house, another of pulling down his barns—one of his books, another of his pictures—one of a poem, another of a tune—one of how he was engaged yesterday, another of what he intends to do to-morrow. In short, not any two of them have their mental wanderings exactly in the same direction; but they are all wandering from the one point on which they ought all to settle, and in many of them there is so rapid a shifting of imaginations, or so entire a vacancy of thought, as defies exact description. And this wandering and vacancy of thought are not the occasional wandering and vacancy which distress the pious and intelligent hearer, but they are their loved and much frequented fields, in which escaping from what to them would be distasteful and annoying truth, they continue willingly and with satisfaction to ramble. Or if, peradventure, and in spite of them, a solitary idea of the momentous spiritualities which are treated of, do force its way into their minds, it is soon displaced by the welcomed return of more favourite subjects; and it is not seldom that they meet it with deep-rooted prejudice and absolute disgust. No wonder if, on these accounts alone, and though there were no invisible adversary, the word should prove to them altogether in vain.

But there is an invisible, wicked, watchful, and cunning enemy, who is ready to do all he can to prevent the effect of the preaching of the gospel. As birds are seen hovering in the air over the field in which the husbandman is sowing, that they may alight and pick up the seed still lying on the surface of the ground; and as afterwards they are seen to devour what has fallen, and continues to lie on the hard beaten road by the side of the field: so we are informed of the very serious fact, that the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, is often present where the word of God is preaching, and exerting all his power and wiles to prevent its success. "*Then cometh the devil:*" according to Mark, "When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately." He knows that there is no time to be lost: he knows that if the seed of the word be allowed to remain any considerable time in the mind, it will be likely to take root, to begin to make some impression. He knows that it is likely enough that, if the hearers continue

to consider the gospel long, they will at last understand it; and that if they understand it, they may then believe it. And he is sure that, if they believed it, his diabolical purpose will be frustrated; they will be withdrawn from his kingdom; they will be saved. Therefore, "*he taketh away the word out of their hearts.*" He acts, probably, by diverting the attention altogether, and by suggesting other absorbing subjects, and by producing confusion of mind, and insinuating doubts of the truth of what is said, and in various ways which we cannot at all describe: and if a few grains of seed, a few scattered notions, still remain on the surface of the mind, they are soon trodden down and destroyed by the succeeding occurrences of life. That Satan exercises a fatally powerful influence in preventing the effect of the word, is taught by the Apostle Paul, when he says to the Corinthians: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

The second class of hearers are commonly called *the stony-ground hearers*. "*And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.*" or, according to Matthew, "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." The explanation, as given by Luke in the 13th verse, is this: "*They on the rock are they, who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*" On this class of hearers, a strong impression, of a certain kind, is made. They not only hear, but pay some attention. Nay, they receive the word, and are deeply interested for the time. The lively exhibition of the gospel, and of the prospects it opens up, and the appeals made to their hearts, touch them strongly, call forth their natural affections, lead them to form resolutions of reformation, and to make professions of love to God and Christ, and inspire them with joy: but all these promising appearances vanish. As seed, that falls on stony ground, or on a rock which has but a very shallow soil upon it, vegetates very soon, much sooner than if it were deeply buried in the ground, but very soon withers away, and certainly dies when drought comes; so, these hearers appear almost immediately to become rejoicing Christians, but having no root—no root of deep conviction and solid gracious principle—they soon begin to decline, and entirely fail in the time of trial. "They believe for a while," and only for a while. We are sure that the faith which justifies can never be lost—that he who is passed from death to life shall never come into condemnation, and that he who is regenerated can never again be in a state of spiritual death. Where the true seed of the word has really taken root, and laid hold, so to speak, of the deep soil of the

human heart, it never altogether dies. True believers, according to the passage already quoted, "are born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." In perfect consistence, however, with this pleasing doctrine, is the alarming truth, that there is a faith which lasts only for a while—namely, the faith which is not of the operation of God, which, however it may embrace the divine origin of the gospel and various things connected with it, yet embraces not the substance of the gospel itself, and which, therefore, never justifies a man, nor scripturally influences, though it may, in a certain way, agitate, his affections. Thus, it is said of Simon the sorcerer, in the 8th chapter of the Acts, that he "himself believed also:" though it is also said of him that "his heart was not right with God," and that he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." But it is clear from the passage in which we have this account of him, that all that was intended by its being said that he believed, was, that a conviction of the divine origin of the gospel was forced on his mind by the miracles which he beheld. No wonder that a faith of this kind, and, indeed, a faith which in any way fails to lay hold on the gospel itself, and to bring pardon, should not be abiding. No wonder that those hearers in whom the word has no root, should, in the time of temptation, either from persecution or from allurements, fall away or apostatize.

There were many of this class of hearers under the ministry of Christ. Thus, we are told,* that from a certain time, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him;" and that the common people who once "heard him gladly," afterwards raised the cry, "Away with him, crucify him." So also, Herod heard John the Baptist "gladly," and "did many things;" and yet afterwards gave orders for his murder. In like manner, there are still too many of this class, who, from the novelty of the gospel to them, or something peculiarly engaging in the manner of its publication, or something else, have their affections excited, and even strongly excited, but whose love soon waxes cold, nay, expires; and who, tried by the opposition, or the enticements of their worldly connexions, relapse into a state of indifference, or even enmity, to all that is good.

The third class of hearers here described, are the *thorny-ground hearers*. "*And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.*" The exposition of this is given in the 14th verse: "*And that which fell among thorns are they, who, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*" The ground, cursed for fallen man's sake, only yields its fruit to his painful labour, and the sweat of his brow; while it produces of itself thorns and thistles, and other noxious herbs and weeds, among which, if seed-corn fall and spring up, they sometimes grow up along with it, so as almost to kill the corn, and so as certainly

* John vi. 66.

to prevent its coming to maturity. Thus it is with the hearers here described. They are not like the way-side hearers, or the seed trodden down, and carried away by birds, which never springs up at all; they are not like those on whom no impression whatever is made by the word; for here the seed springs up, and they are somewhat affected. Neither are they like the stony-ground hearers, or the seed which, though it springs up, withers away entirely, or those who after strong feeling completely fall away; for here the seed not only springs, but the plant lives, and appears perhaps even to thrive—that is, they do not fall away, or openly apostatize, or throw off all appearance and profession of religion. Still, however, they are essentially deficient. Like the corn, whose stalk, situated as here described, lives, but is choked and impoverished, and whose husk is empty, or has its contents blasted and useless; so they have a name to live, but are dead; they have the form, but not the power, of godliness; they have, in many things, the appearance of what is good, but in nothing the reality: the cares, and pleasures, and riches of the world, like rank and overshadowing thorns, abstracting the strength of the soil, and keeping off the light of heaven and the influence of the sun, choke the word, so that it brings no fruit to perfection.

Too true it is, as our Lord here teaches, that this baneful effect is often produced by “the cares of this life.” He alludes to sinful cares; and these are either cares about things which are in themselves sinful; or, which is far more common with this class of hearers, cares which, though they are about things in their own nature warrantable, or even necessary and incumbent, as, for example, a man’s calling, yet become sinful by their excess, engrossing the affections, and so perplexing the mind and engaging the time, as to shut out true religion, by rendering it impracticable to pay it that attention which it must have in order to give it any supreme influence on the heart and character. Alas! how many are ruined in this way! Look at many among us only as they outwardly appear, while they are decently sitting in the house of God, under the preaching of the word, and it would be natural to conclude that all was well with them: but follow the same persons through the remainder of the week, as they toil on, either in lowly penury, or in a conspicuous station of life; and not only their time and bodily labour, but, what is much more decisive, their thoughts and supreme desires are so swallowed up by the world, as to rank them with those who “mind earthly things,” and to preclude the possibility of their following up what they have heard in the church, so as to become truly pious, and bring fruit to perfection. Such cares as these our Lord enumerates along with gross vices, and declares them to be equally fatal to the soul, when he says: “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”

So it is, also, with the "riches of this life ;"—they, too, choke the seed of the word, and prevent the fruitfulness of many. There are some who are greatly injured by the actual possession of riches. Matthew and Mark here use the expressions, "the deceitfulness of riches." In some, the bad habits which the spending of them fosters; in others, the selfishness and griping parsimony of hoarding them; and in others, the obstacles which they throw in the way of breaking with the world; effectually prevent the decided influence of what they hear. Thus we read that a certain young man came to Jesus, calling him "Good Master," and asking what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life; but, when he heard his instructions, "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. There are many more, however, who are deeply injured by the desire of riches: for to this, persons in every class of society, even the lowest, are subject. Covetousness is idolatry: it is the departure of the heart from God. Sometimes, even while men are sitting before God, as his people sit, and hearing his word, they have their hearts going after their covetousness: at all events, to get gain is habitually their most earnest desire and favourite pursuit. But this spirit is inconsistent with true religion. "No man can serve two masters," says our Lord. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "The love of money," says Paul, "is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

And so it is, too, with "the pleasures of this life," or what are called, in Mark, "the lusts," or desires, "of other things" besides riches—and elsewhere, "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life:"—these also choke the seed of the word in many. The pursuit of pleasures, acknowledged on all hands to be sinful, is plainly the ruin of some; and the inordinate pursuit of enjoyments which might otherwise be safe, is no less fatal with others. Those who live in such pleasure, are "dead while they live." Those who "serve divers lusts and pleasures," are "deceived," whatever they may dream of religion. "Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," are immediately joined, by Paul, with those who "have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."* Of intemperance and impurity, the end is declared to be death: but let it not be forgotten, that the pursuit of the less offensive worldly gaities and frivolities so dissipates the mind, as to prevent any decided benefit from the preaching of the word. Thus, in various ways, the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life choke the seed of the word in many, so that there is nothing really good in them, though they never entirely throw off the profession of religion. Their knowledge is very partial, and not influential; their faith is nominal; their sorrow is not a godly sorrow; their prayers and praises are lifeless; their alms are destitute of true Christian

* 1 Tim. iii. 5.

charity, or love ;—there is something radically deficient in every part of their character—“ they bring no fruit to perfection.”

The fourth and last class of hearers, and the only class who reap saving benefit from the preaching of the word, are thus described : “ *And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold.*” The exposition of this part of the parable, is given in the 15th verse : “ *But that on the good ground are they, who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*” What is here said of a good heart, and the consequent success of the word, must not be understood as implying that there is anything spiritually good in any man’s heart, previous to his becoming the subject of the regenerating grace of God ; or, that the success of the gospel is owing to any aptitude in any mind to receive it, independently on that grace : for, the tenor of Scripture teaches that the human heart is, without exception depraved, that all good is from God, and in particular, that the success of the gospel is to be attributed to his special grace. Consistently with all this, however, in those hearers in whom the seed of the word is to become fruitful, there is produced an honesty, a simplicity, a sincerity, an uprightness of intention, a desire to profit. This preparation of the heart is of the Lord ; and the ground is made good by him. This class of hearers, as contrasted with the way-side hearers, not only hear, but understand, and are impressed, so that the seed, or word, takes root in their hearts. As contrasted with the stony-ground hearers, the seed not only springs up, but continues to flourish ; they retain, or keep, the word. And, as contrasted with the thorny-ground hearers, who come nearest of any to true Christians not to be altogether so, they not only keep the word, but they keep it to good purpose, so as to bear fruit to perfection—fruit ripe and truly good. With them there is, in the spiritual sense, “ first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” They are by no means all equally fruitful, however. We are told, both in Matthew and in Mark, that they bring forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty.” An hundred-fold was indeed a very uncommon increase, yet good authority assures us that it was sometimes known in that very fruitful country. Such a case as that of the apostle Paul, who, from a persecutor, became so eminent a saint and minister, may be considered as an example of this wonderful increase : and there are still individuals from time to time, who far surpass, in attainments, the generality of Christians. Sixty-fold was also a great increase, even in Judea, though not very uncommon : of this rank are all those who are strong in the faith, lively in their affections, zealous of good works, very exemplary in their walk, and ready to do and to suffer everything for Christ. Thirty-fold, or the reaping thirty times as much as was sown, was common in that country. This may include those of all the lower degrees of Christian principle and service ; all who are weak in the faith, and babes in Christ ;

all who, though truly accepted and sanctified, have yet great imperfections, and do comparatively but little for God. All of this class, however, do keep, or retain the word, and are fruitful in some degree. They all bring forth fruit with patience, or perseverance; they all continue and increase in the faith and obedience of the truth, and seek to become more and more fruitful. All of them "being made free from sin, and having become servants to God, have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

And now, as Jesus cried, when he had spoken this parable, so we cry again, "*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" This parable is just as applicable to you as it was to those to whom it was originally addressed. Persons of all the four classes here described, are to be found among you; and it is your duty to consider to which of them you belong, and then not to put aside the word, but to apply it to yourselves.

You who, like the *way-side* hearers, do not consider the word, nor understand it, and who are not at all impressed by it, think how inexcusable your conduct is, in reference both to us, and to our Master. Think of the incivility, the rudeness of paying no attention to what we say; and think of the pain and discouragement of labouring in vain. But this is little to the folly and guilt of your conduct in reference to God, while you count as a vain thing the great things of his law which he declares to you. Remember, your attendance here cannot be without some effect; the gospel must prove to you, either the savour of life unto life or the savour of death unto death. Remember how it gratifies the great enemy of your souls, when he succeeds in keeping you in this careless state; and be on your guard against him, if you have any wish to escape the fate prepared for the devil and his angels. He could have no power over you, were it not for a fault in yourselves. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

You who, like the *stony-ground* hearers, are, at times, strongly impressed, but whose impressions are not lasting, think of the futility of all such evanescent feelings. Thus falling back, you become worse than before. But how can it be otherwise? How can you be steady, when the good work has not been begun in you? How can you bring forth fruit, when the root of the matter is not found in you? How can there be growth, where there is neither life nor nourishment? "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Seek to get the seed of the word deeply rooted in your hearts, in the way of faith, regeneration, and repentance; and thus you will have within you an indestructible principle, which will stand every trial.

There is also a radical defect in you who belong to the class of the *thorny-ground* hearers, namely, that you have never been

thoroughly converted to God. Seek that a much deeper impression may be made on you; and, at the same time, be on your guard against those things which are here stated to have a powerful influence in preventing your conversion and fruitfulness. Leave not the seed on the surface, but harrow it in by meditation and prayer. Beware of the cares of this life. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing. Cast all your care on him, and he will care for you. Beware of the deceitfulness of riches, in possession and in desire. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, or one who trusts in riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Beware of the pleasures of this life, whether grossly immoral or merely dissipating, and characteristic of those who seek not their happiness in God. Hear this, ye that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly: sit silent and get you into darkness. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your mirth into heaviness. If you of this class are satisfied to sleep on and perish, you may continue as you are: but, if you wish to bear any good fruit, and to be saved, you must bethink yourselves, and proceed in a totally different manner. Be most anxious that the word may come to you with power: and look through all instruments to the Lord; for, Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God who giveth the increase.

Speaking, finally, to those of you who are like the good-ground hearers, how can we but rejoice before God on your account? "For this cause thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Hold fast the faithful word, as ye have been taught. Rest not satisfied with small degrees of fruitfulness; but continue to improve, knowing that according to your progress, so will be your gracious reward. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

LECTURE XL.

LUKE VIII. 16-21.

"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17. For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. 18. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. 19. Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20. And it was told him by certain, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God, and do it."

THE figurative illustrations of divine truth, given by our Lord, are very numerous, very natural, and, generally speaking, very simple: but, however numerous, they are all important and instructive; however natural, they are not so obvious as to be uninteresting; however simple, they are never low or coarse. How simple and natural, for example, and yet how beautiful and edifying this parable of the lighted candle! It seems, so to speak, to have been a favourite figure with our Saviour; for he introduced it into his sermon on the mount, and we read of him employing it again in the 11th chapter of Luke, at the 33d verse. "*No man,*" says he, according to the passage before us, "*when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they who enter in may see the light.*" The literal meaning of these words is so obvious, that no explanation can render them more intelligible; and all must be so agreed, that, in such circumstances, men would pursue the conduct here supposed, that nothing need be said on that point. But what are the lessons read to us in this parable? It will assist in answering this question, to turn to the more full view given, in the parallel passage in the sermon on the mount, Matt. v. 14: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

This parable, first of all, supposes that men's natural state is a state of darkness; for, why introduce light, if all were already clear? Their state is like that of the world without, when the sun has long been down; or, like that of an apartment in a house at midnight, in which there is no artificial light. They are all naturally ignorant of God, of their own state, of the way

of restoration to the divine favour and image, of the rule of duty, and of the life to come. In the world, deeds of darkness are committed; the prince of darkness reigns; and many false lights are visible, which could not be, if it were spiritual day—if there were any one clear, sufficient, safe light. And this is the case, not merely in countries where the gospel has never been published, but in our own land, where it is preached and generally professed. With regard to vast multitudes, even all who are of the world, “darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.” As to religion, they are “in darkness, and walk in darkness, and know not whither they go, because darkness hath blinded their eyes.”

Still, however, there are some who are as a light on earth, or as a candle in a dark place; for such, we gather farther from this parable, are the disciples of Christ. It is true that, in the highest sense, he himself is “the Light of the world;” yet he says to his disciples, in an inferior sense, according to the passage already quoted: “Ye are the light of the world.” Peculiarly applicable to the apostles and public preachers of the word, this description is characteristic of all who know, and profess, and walk in the truth. Though once darkness, they have become light in the Lord. They are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. He is the light of the world; but, it is added, that they who follow him, “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Their light is borrowed, no doubt; but still it is useful to themselves and others. They shine with a reflected light; but still they do shine. Teachers especially, and all enlightened Christians in some degree, serve to diffuse the light of true doctrine: and all who walk consistently with their profession, give an open, practical, and attractive illustration of what true religion is.

Again, as a lighted candle is not covered up, but placed on a candlestick, and in a favourable situation for diffusing its light around; so we are here taught, that Christians are not at liberty to withdraw from society, but are called on to do their duty in it. They cannot innocently, as monks and nuns, shut themselves up in cloisters, or, as hermits, wander away from the face of men into deserts. Voluntary humility, self-righteousness, and worship, may look on such conduct with admiration; but the Word of God condemns it. Believers must not desert their post. Christians are bound to occupy their place, and to do their duty—in families, in the Church, and in society at large. They must do what they can to improve and illuminate their own circle, whether it be great or small. Nor let any of them reckon his own sphere insignificant, or forget that, by occupying it properly, he may far surpass the man who unworthily fills a greater. Better a small apartment, well lighted, than a spacious hall in which a sickly taper only renders darkness visible.

Moreover, taking into view the two great, and ever consis-

tent objects, at which Christians ought to aim in all that they say and do—namely, the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures who see their light, or observe their conduct—we infer, that this parable is equally opposed to vanity and ostentation, and to false shame and indecision. Neither this nor any other part of Scripture gives professors of religion any sanction to an ostentatious display of their knowledge, graces, and good works; *that*, instead of serving any good purpose, would be sinful and hurtful, and would be so far from glorifying God, that it would expose religion to contempt, and feed their own pride. Such vanity is condemned, in the strongest terms, in many parts of the Word of God, and particularly in the directions given by our Lord for almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Instead of doing their alms before men, to be seen of them, they are not to let their left hand know what their right hand doeth. Instead of praying in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men, they are to enter into their closet, and pray in secret. Instead of being of a sad countenance, and disfiguring their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast, they are to anoint their head and wash their face. Some, however, are disposed to carry this too far, and would have it thought that all, or almost all, outward appearances of religion and benevolence are ostentatious and hypocritical, and therefore to be avoided. In opposition to both these extremes, we ought to pursue that line of conduct which lies at the due medium between that vanity which seeks to push itself into notice, and that timid lukewarmness which prevents both the appearance and the reality of active piety and virtue. Though we are not to pray, or to give alms, or to do any good action whatever, in order to be seen of men, we are not to abstain from doing what is good, because it may be seen of men. Nay, it is frequently the duty of the Christian to appear openly in the cause of God, on account of the good effect which the expression of his sentiments and his example may have on others.

Any very full account of the conduct which is incumbent on believers does not seem to be required here, as the parable contains rather an animated call to the lively exercise of all the Christian graces, than a description of any of them in particular. The following hints, however, may be proper. Perhaps the idea which is first suggested by the light which ought to shine in the Christian, is that of an open and decided declaration of his principles, with the view of recommending them to his fellow-creatures. He is to entertain, profess, and do what he can by his exertions, to diffuse the genuine doctrines of the gospel. Next to this, it is here implied that he is to be very careful to act according to the precepts of the Gospel, than which nothing is more adorning and more likely to be useful. He is to be regular and conscientious in the observance of all the ordinances of religion. In his intercourse with his fellow-creatures, he is to be just, true, forgiving, affectionate, and charitable. He

is to be a companion of those that fear God, and keep his precepts: and when he happens to be with any of a different character, he is not to allow himself, from motives of mistaken and unjustifiable complaisance, to say or do what his conscience condemns. He is, also, to keep his passions and affections under the control of religion. To talk much of heaven, and to be, at the same time, obviously engrossed with the cares of the world, is the sure way to open the mouths of gainsayers. He who would glorify God, and benefit men, must live so as to convince observers that God is his portion—that Christ is his trust—that the Holy Spirit is his guide—that the divine law is his delight—and that he would not exchange the hope of the Christian for all the pleasures and honours of this life. In short, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, or of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise; these things he is to think on, and reduce to practice.

Learn here, then, believers, your duty (for I shall not insist on the duties of ministers as such, though they are here included)—learn here your duty, all of you who are the Lord's, and be exhorted to practise it in God's strength. Do not fall into the error of supposing that because you ought not to be conformed to the world, you must needs therefore go out of the world. You have your prescribed part to act in the world, though you are not of it. Do not shut yourselves up, when you are called on to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. Whatever is in your power to say and do, for the glory of God and the good of men, say it and do it. If you have ten talents, employ them all. If you have only one talent, do not hide it in a napkin. If you move as you ought to do in your station, remember that many eyes are upon you. Your inconsistency will likely do much evil, your exemplariness will likely do much good. "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."—"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—"Have your conversation, therefore, honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Verse 17: "*For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; nei'her any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.*" Probably, to many these words might suggest the idea that all will be disclosed in the day of judgment; and in this sense they would, no doubt, be true, and furnish a powerful motive to the avoiding of hypocrisy, and to the discharge of every duty. In this sense, they would correspond with what our Lord says in the 12th chapter of Luke, near the beginning: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is

nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops." And it surely becomes us always to act as remembering that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

This, however, does not seem to be the application intended to be made of the words in this connection; for, here they are introduced as following up the direction, in the preceding verse, not to conceal, but to diffuse, the light of divine truth. As applicable more immediately to that time, and to the disciples who were then present, and especially to the apostles, the words declare that it was Christ's intention that what they heard from him sometimes privately, should be faithfully published by them; and thus the words find an illustration in this passage in the 10th chapter of Matthew, from the 26th verse, where our Lord is giving directions to the apostles, on their being sent out to preach the gospel: "Fear them not, therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops." The words also imply that, whatever veil might hang over some things for a time, and whatever comparative obscurity might attend his parables and his present mode of instruction, it was his resolution that every thing should ultimately be unfolded as plainly, and published as extensively, as possible. As more generally applicable to Christianity, and to the wish of its Founder with regard to its publication in all ages, these words imply that there is here nothing of that affectation of mystery, and studied concealment, which characterized most of the heathen priests and philosophers, who fully instructed only the initiated, only a favoured few, and kept the great bulk of the people in the dark, with regard to what they deemed the most sacred and most important points. Here every thing is open, and equally addressed to all ranks and descriptions of men: and all are invited and encouraged, nay, commanded, to hear, consider, search, and understand. While the duty, therefore, of the unrestrained publication of the whole truth is acknowledged on the one hand, let the obligation of the attentive examination, and thankful reception of the whole truth, be acknowledged on the other. While great plainness of speech is to be used in declaring the whole counsel of God, let great simplicity and readiness of mind be shown in the embracing of it. The will of God is now brought to light in the New Testament; let all behold and welcome that light. We have a "sure word of prophecy, whereunto we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place; until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts."

Verse 18: "*Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.*" The connection

appears to be this—as the light of the truth was to be diffused, in other words, as the whole doctrines and duties of the gospel were to be plainly published, it was, of course, incumbent on all to take heed how they heard. In the parallel passage of Mark iv. 24, our Lord said, according to our version, “Take heed *what* ye hear.” Hearers ought, unquestionably, to consider whether what they hear be agreeable or contrary to the Word of God, and to receive or reject it accordingly. This may be inferred, as from the nature of things, so also from such passages as these: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—“These,” namely, the hearers at Berea, “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.”—“Beware of false prophets.”* Some commentators, however, are of opinion that this is not the idea intended to be conveyed by these words, as given by Mark; but that their meaning is much the same with what is suggested by the passage as in Luke. The clause in Mark may, perhaps, be rendered, “Heed what you hear;” that is, take heed *to* it, attend to it.† In this view it is a caution, not so much to beware of false doctrine, as to give proper attention to true.

The caution, “Take heed how you hear,” would itself, if fully handled, furnish subject for a sermon: in an exercise of this kind, however, a few hints are all that can, with propriety, be given; and they shall be given, at once, in the form of directions, without illustration, and in as many sentences. Hear with a prepared and sedate mind. Hear without prejudice. Hear with freedom from a critical and captious spirit. Hear with humility and teachableness. Hear with close attention. Hear with a desire to profit. Hear with personal application. Hear with faith. Hear with love. Hear with dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Hear, so as to remember, and to do.

It concerns even those who have already received the gospel, to take heed how they hear. Let them beware of whatever would prevent them from deriving full benefit from hearing. Let them not suppose that they know and feel enough to render their presence at the preaching of the word, or their taking a lively interest in it, of little consequence to them. A peculiar blessing, and a peculiar energy attend this ordinance, for all who enter heartily into its spirit: and pastors are declared to be appointed, not only for the conversion of sinners, but “for the perfecting of the saints,” and “for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

But especially ought this caution to be attended to by those of you who are hearing without profit. There is, doubtless, much imperfection in the manner of publishing the gospel; but

* See also 2 John 10.

† Βλῑπτῑ τῑ ἀκουῑτι.

you may rest assured that the chief fault lies with yourselves. If you do not bring to the hearing of the word a spirit of wilful enmity and intentional opposition; if you do not studiously preserve an insensibility of mind, and boast, or feel ready to boast, of your remaining as you are, and of your not allowing yourselves to be moved by our representations, as if that would betray weakness: consider whether you do not come short of the saving benefit of the truth itself, by fixing your thoughts too much on the instruments of its promulgation, and by amusing yourselves with idly speculating on that by which you ought to be deeply impressed. Does it, then, require talents so extraordinary to tell you that you are naturally condemned, and depraved, and helpless, and that a way is provided for your recovery by the blood and spirit of Christ? Are these things so uninteresting in themselves, that they can have no weight with you unless they have many adventitious aids? or rather, is it not the very simplicity of these truths which constitutes their grandeur and their power? When we tell you of your danger, are you to remain unmoved, unless it be well told? When we show you the sword of divine justice suspended, as it were by a hair, over your heads, are you, instead of shrinking, and hastening from under it, to stop and entertain yourselves with examining whether its hilt be well ornamented and its blade well polished? When we point to the chains with which the devil has bound you, is it as if you were in your senses, to amuse yourselves with listening to their tinkling? When we bring forward the bread of life for your famishing souls, is it for you to loathe it on the pretence (for it is a pretence,) that it is not prepared with your own favourite seasoning? When we speak of Christ and the gospel, of God and eternity, is it for you to think only of how we are speaking, and to pay no attention to what is spoken, to take no heed how you hear? Ah! trifle not so with the word of God. Remember, that though its ministers are human, its authority is divine. The vessels are earthen, but it is indeed a treasure which they contain. The pitchers are of little value, and they will be soon broken, and, as to any further use here, thrown away; but the light itself is heavenly and glorious. Take heed, therefore, to the treasure, and to the light. Take heed how you hear. If you continue to disregard his word, God may avenge himself on you, by withdrawing it from you, or you from it, or, by depriving it of all power to affect you, even so far as it does at present. He may say of you, they are joined to idols, they are resolutely bent on sin and folly;—let them alone.

This, or something very like this, is the argument with which our Lord here enforces the caution, “Take heed how you hear: *for, whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*” This argument, as it is expressed in the exactly parallel passages of Matthew and Mark, and as it is also introduced on an entirely

different occasion, namely, in the parable of the talents,* bears a paradoxical or contradictory appearance; for there, it is said, in the last clause, that "whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." But that difficulty is removed by the way in which the last clause is worded in the passage before us, "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he *seemeth* to have." There is here a contrast, you observe, between him that hath, and him that seemeth to have.† He that hath, is he who is in possession of advantages, principles, and goodness, which are really his own; in other words, he who has so improved his religious privileges, that they turn to his salvation. To every such person "it shall be given;" and it is said, in Matthew, "he shall have more abundance." That is, his privileges shall be continued and increased; and he shall grow in grace and in knowledge. On the other hand, "whosoever hath not" so improved his privileges, that they, and his attainments, may be strictly called his own, "from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." Whatever advantages he may possess, and whatever attainments he may make, however great excellence he may seem to himself and others to have reached; if he be a graceless man, he will be stripped of the whole, as transitory and hollow. He may seem to himself, and to others, to be rich, and increased in goods, and to stand in need of nothing; yet shall he soon be seen to be poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. The Apostle James teaches that a man may seem to be religious, and yet his religion be vain. "Let no man, then, deceive himself." Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think. But let all take heed how they hear, and so improve their privileges, that their attainments may be solid, and their advantages and character ever improving.

Verse 19: "*Then came to him his mother (Mary) and his brethren;*" that is, probably, his cousins, or near relations; for the word brethren, as used by the Jews, did not necessarily signify full brothers. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" said the people on one occasion;‡ "is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us?" His friends sought to get at him, at this time; for what purpose does not certainly appear, though it may have been to remonstrate with him, and to endeavour to dissuade him from going on as he was doing. We read, in Mark iii. 20, as follows: "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on

* Matt. xiii. 12, xxv. 29; Mark iv. 24; Luke xix. 26.

† Some critics, however, are of opinion that the word *ἔστιν* is here an expletive, signifying reality, and not appearance. Dr Ad. Clarke *in locum*; and Pearce's Note on Mark x. 42.—An apt illustration of this clause is found in Juvenal, Sat. iii.

Nil habuit Codrus: quis enim negat? et tamen illud

Perdidit infelix totum nil.

‡ Matt. xiii. 55.

him; for they said, He is beside himself." But, whatever may have been the reason of their seeking him, they could not get close to him, for the crowd. On this, certain persons said to him: "*Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God, and do it:*" or, as it is more fully related by Matthew:* "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For, whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."†

On these words of our Lord, we may remark, 1st, That *they are not intended to cast a slight on his mother and brethren, or to undervalue the duties men owe to their relations.* This could never have been the design of him who was so attentive to every duty, and of whom it was said, particularly, that, in early life, he went down to Nazareth, and was subject unto his parents, and that, on the cross, he manifested the most tender concern for his mother, whom he was about to leave behind him in the world. Undoubtedly, all who have friends, should themselves be friendly. We remark, however, from these words,

2d, That *we must not allow our regard to our relations to interfere with our duty to God.* Our Lord went on with his public duty, at this time, unmoved by this interruption: and he might have said, as on a former occasion, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" So Levi "said unto his father and mother, I have not seen them: neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." The Church is thus addressed:‡ "Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house." He that loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, or brethren, or sisters, more than Christ, is not worthy of him, and cannot be his disciple. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh," says the Apostle Paul; "yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Every thing that comes into competition with our duty to our Lord, must give way.

3d, These words show *the sinfulness and the folly of all superstitious regard to the Virgin Mary.* She was but a woman, nay, an erring and sinful woman—a sinner saved by grace. Her Son followed his own way, notwithstanding her coming; and he seems studiously to have expressed himself so as to show the superiority of true religion to any honour she could claim, merely as his mother.

4th, Our Lord seems here to have alluded to the fact that

* Matt. xii. 48.

† Andromache says to Hector, 'Ἐκτορ, ἄταρ συ μοι ἴσσι πατὴρ καὶ ποτὶς μητὴρ' Ἡδὲ καὶ γνήσιος.—Thou art my father, and venerable mother and brother.—*Iliad*, vi. 429.

‡ 1's. xlv. 10.

many of his relations did not believe and obey him; and, in connection with that fact, to have taught that *nothing but personal faith and obedience can avail for safety*. John tells us† that “neither did Christ’s brethren believe in him.” But, without faith, they could not be saved. In like manner, it holds true universally, that no connection with pious relations, and no advantages whatever, can supply the want of saving grace and personal religion.

But finally, and chiefly, these words are intended to express *the great love Jesus bears to his true disciples, and the high honour he bestows on them*. A man is supposed to love his mother, and brothers, and sisters, and to do what he can for their good. So, however intense may be the love that a good man bears to his nearest and dearest connections, all that love, and much more, did Christ bear to these disciples. This was a privilege truly delightful, profitable, and honourable. Nor was this privilege peculiar to those who were then present: for, “this honour have all the saints.” Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He is akin to them not merely by his own incarnation, but also by their regeneration after his image: and he will fully perform the kind offices of a kinsman. Think of this, ye who are of his family. What an honour to be so nearly related to the King of kings! What happiness, also, is thus secured to you through him! He will be ever sympathizing and ever faithful. Other relations may prove unfaithful, or be removed from you by death; but Jesus is “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” Cease from man, then, and trust in your Divine Redeemer. Cleave to him, and he will take you all home, as one happy family, to dwell in the house of his Father and your Father, for ever and ever.—Learn, too, in what light you are to regard those who hear the word of God and do it. Look on them as the excellent of the earth. Regard the lowliest Christian as the beloved brother, or sister, of your great Redeemer; and bear his people the tenderest love, and do them all the good you can, for the sake of Him who, as he is their elder brother, and your elder brother, becomes the connecting link of brotherhood and sisterhood between you all; and who will, at last, say to you: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

* John vii. 5.

LECTURE XLI.

LUKE VIII. 22-25.

“ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples : and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23. But as they sailed he fell asleep : and there came down a storm of wind on the lake ; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water ; and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith ? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this ? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.”

MEN are naturally fond of the marvellous. Whatever is extraordinary draws them forth in crowds, and attracts their admiring gaze and anxious inquiry. No doubt, the effect of this is only the gratification of idle curiosity, and the excitement of empty wonderment. But that is when the things which cause men's wonder have only a mock grandeur, or when the truly magnificent displays of divine power are not regarded with suitable dispositions. As for the works of God, they are indeed astonishing, and their right contemplation is, along with his own blessing, of admirable use in leading men to exercise towards him the graces of reverential fear, adoring admiration, holy obedience, and stedfast trust. “ I would seek unto God,” says Eliphaz, “ and unto God would I commit my cause ; who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number :” and the song of Moses and of the Lamb teaches us to sing, “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy.” But however marvellous, in themselves, the works of creation and providence unquestionably are, the constancy with which they are presented to our view takes away much from their impression ; the divine wisdom and goodness are, therefore, conspicuous in that departure from the ordinary course of nature and providence which occurred in the miracles recorded in Scripture, as they are peculiarly calculated, both to serve as a proof of revelation, and to awaken our attention to its important subjects. The miracles performed by our Lord himself during his ministry on earth, were very numerous ; and, of all the works performed by him whose name is “ Wonderful,” few, if any, are more wonderful than this of which we have here an account. We shall first consider the circumstances of the miracle itself, together with such observations as may appear to be directly

suggested by it; and we shall then, as the explanation of the disciples leads us, consider what manner of man this miracle proved Jesus to be.

This miracle is recorded by Matthew, in his 8th chapter from the 23d verse; and by Mark, in his 4th chapter from the 35th verse. "*Now it came to pass,*" says Luke, *on a certain day.*" Mark says that it was "on the same day, when the even was come; that is, in the evening of the same day on which Jesus spoke several parables which were just related. Both Matthew and Mark make mention of our Lord's giving express directions to the disciples to pass over to the other side; that is, to the opposite shore of the Sea of Tiberias, otherwise called the Sea of Galilee, and the Lake of Gennesaret. Matthew says, that "when Christ was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him;" and Mark states that "they took him even as he was, in the ship;" that is, the disciples set out on the passage immediately, without waiting to make any preparation. "*He said unto them,*" according to Luke, "*Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.*" Observe here, that we have the example of our Lord and his disciples for going to sea. Though always attended with some danger, it is not a tempting of Providence to put to sea in circumstances not obviously improper. It is a lawful mode of proceeding from one place to another, nay, it is sometimes an incumbent duty. Christ may still be said, at times, by the voice of his providence, to command his disciples to go to sea: and when he thus commands, and when duty calls, it is unworthy of them to hesitate, or to be afraid. Observe, however, also, that all who go to sea will do well to have Christ with them in the ship. You know the meaning of this remark: it is not that his bodily presence, as a passenger, can now be had, but it is that his spiritual and invisible, providential and gracious presence, is necessary to their safety. Wherever they are, and however they are employed, those who are leading a life of faith in Christ, have him always along with them; for, to all such he says: "Lo, I am with you alway." If they have his providential protection, they are secure against all the literal dangers of the deep: and, at all events, if they have Christ in their hearts, if he and all his unsearchable riches be theirs, their souls are safe, though their bodies should go to the bottom.

Mark states, that "there were also with Christ other little ships." Probably, there were on board of these many whom the bark in which our Lord was could not accommodate. Though the multitude was sent away, yet it would seem that part of them were so affected by what they had seen and heard, during their attendance on him, as to resolve to accompany him across the sea, to enjoy a continuance of his ministry. So, at all times, those who profess to value religious ordinances should not grudge to go to a distance, or to submit to trouble, and, if need be, danger, in order to enjoy them. We often hear of people crossing seas, and travelling far away, to see interesting coun-

tries and cities, and entirely changing their abode from one part of the country to another, or from one town to another, for the sake of certain worldly advantages: it would be well, if there were more instances of persons acting in the same manner, in order to secure gospel privileges.

We are here told that "*as they sailed, Jesus fell asleep.*" Partaker of our sinless bodily and mental infirmities, he stood in need of the refreshment of sleep from time to time; and now, in particular, he must have been much fatigued with the abundant labours of the preceding day. Serene and sweet must have been the repose of one so holy, and so free from what can alarm the soul. So may every one of his followers, who holds faith and a good conscience, go to rest, saying: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart."—"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety."

As they were sailing, and when the darkness of the night must have been come on, "*there came down a storm of wind on the lake;*" a sudden and most violent tempest arose, so that "*they were filled* (that is, their ship was filled) *with water*"—"the waves beat into the ship," and they "*were in jeopardy*," in the utmost danger of perishing. Though the disciples had put to sea at the divine command, yet they were overtaken by a storm. We learn from this, that, though to those who follow the path of duty, there is a promise that all things will, in some way, work together for their good, there is no promise of absolute exemption from trouble. If we desire, therefore, faithfully to follow Christ, let us not deceive ourselves by expecting what he has never promised. He and his immediate disciples were exposed to a storm, and we are not to look for a constant calm. It is even said that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," and that they "must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

During this tremendous storm, Jesus, as already noticed, was asleep; he was, according to Mark, "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." This appeared very strange to the disciples, and it also added much to their terror, for they evidently thought that he could not be aware of their situation. They "*came to him*," therefore, "*and awoke him.*" According to Mark, they said to him (for various expressions seem to have been used by them), "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" There was, surely, in this, an expression of suspicion of his care and kindness, which, however the trying situation in which they were placed might in some measure palliate, it could not justify. And so it is, frequently, that even his own people, in the perturbation of trouble, entertain, and perhaps express, suspicious thoughts of him, for which they ought to be deeply humbled, and against the recurrence of which they ought to be much on their guard.

According to Luke, the disciples exclaimed, as they awoke Christ, "*Master, Master, we perish!*" This was an exclamation

of extreme terror. According to Matthew, their procedure drew from our Lord this kind, though sharp rebuke, before he wrought the miracle, "Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!" Though the following illustration of this passage must have been often given, it is too appropriate to be omitted. Cæsar, being at sea in a dreadful storm, maintained the most perfect tranquillity himself, while those around him were in dismay. When the pilot's, or rather master's, courage at last forsook him, and he was giving up all for lost, Cæsar addressed him, magnanimously, to this effect: "Why are you afraid? Remember that ye carry Cæsar, and the fortune of Cæsar." "Why are ye fearful?" said Jesus to his disciples. Had they known and considered all, they would have felt secure; for they carried a far greater person than Cæsar, and a far greater fortune than Cæsar's, if on a subject so divine, we may apply a word so heathenish. They carried "the Prince of the kings of the earth," and the everlasting destiny of men. Jesus had much more to do and suffer, before he was to die; and, bearing him forward to what lay before him, they were, in the meantime at least perfectly safe. Our Lord here also exposes the true cause of their fear—it was that they had so little faith: for, if they had had all the confidence in his grace and power which they ought to have had, considering what they had already witnessed, they would not now have been thrown into this perturbation. So, all the fears of God's people either arise from want of faith, or are aggravated by it. It becomes them, not only to beware of rash complaints, but to look to him to keep them from unbelief, and to enable them to be of good courage.

Much unnecessary alarm, and much unbelief, as the disciples manifested on this occasion, they nevertheless also manifested some true piety, and even genuine faith; for, you will find from Matthew, that they betook themselves to Christ in earnest prayer, saying, "Lord, save us; we perish." It has been sometimes said, that if there be earnest prayer anywhere, it is at sea, and especially during a storm; and there can be no doubt that there is then something peculiarly calculated to draw forth the soul in sincere supplication for safety. It is very necessary, however, not to confound the prayer which is the mere cry of nature, with the prayer of genuine, habitual piety, and of faith. The desire of self-preservation, which has been called the first law of our nature, must not be mistaken for the holy and confidential turning of the soul to God in the time of trouble. Threatening external circumstances are often found to extort passionate supplications for deliverance from those who are altogether in a state of unbelief and impenitence. The cry of nature may, in such circumstances, be followed by deliverance from drowning, or it may not; but it cannot be followed by any spiritual or eternal blessing: whereas, the prayer of faith has the promise of literal deliverance, if it be for God's glory and his people's real good; and, at all events, whatever befall their

bodies, it will be followed by the endless salvation of their souls. The prayer offered up at this time, was the prayer, though of weak, yet of truly pious persons, of real disciples, and it was the prayer, though of little, yet of some faith. They plainly turned to the true source of safety at this time; they looked only to the Lord; and they seem to have, at last, looked to him with the expectation of deliverance.

How excellent, though brief, a model of prayer do these words furnish to us, when we think of our naturally perishing and helpless state because of sin! Let us go to the Saviour sensible that such is our state, and fully convinced of his ability and willingness to help us; let us renounce every other ground of hope, and let us cast ourselves on his mercy saying, Lord, save us, else we perish.

No sooner had the disciples made this prayerful application to our Lord, than he interposed for their deliverance. "*Then he arose,*" that is, he arose from the pillow on which he had been sleeping, "*and rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water.*" Mark records the words he employed. "He said unto the sea, Peace, be still." He spoke, probably, to show that the coming calm was of his making: and, the words being accompanied with divine power, the wind and the raging of the water "ceased, and there was a calm;" or, as the other two evangelists express it, "a great calm." The miracle was instantaneous and complete: the wind not only ceased, but the waves, instead of continuing, as usual, to be agitated for some time after, and only gradually subsiding, settled immediately; and the surface of the sea became perfectly smooth in a moment. If we are to consider Luke's account as giving all the circumstances he mentions in the exact order of time, then our Lord adverted again, and after the miracle, to the weakness of faith the disciples had discovered; and, surely, the scene they had now witnessed must have re-established their faith. Having, however, noticed this point already, we need not now enlarge on it further.

No wonder that this miracle made a very powerful impression on the disciples. Luke tells us that they were "*afraid,*" and Mark, that "they feared exceedingly." This must have been a very different kind of fear, however, from what agitated them, when they thought themselves in danger of perishing in the waters: it must have been a reverential fear, a holy awe, suitable to a deliverance at once so gracious and so astonishing. And this is the fear that becomes all who, by pardoning mercy, are delivered from the danger of perishing eternally:—this is the fear of which the Psalmist speaks, when he says that "there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared," and the prophet Hosea, when he says that "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter day."

Luke also adds that the disciples "*wondered;*" they were amazed at what they had witnessed, "*saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and*

water, and they obey him." And well might they thus exclaim, for, it is difficult to conceive anything more marvellous. But let us now, as their exclamation suggests, consider what manner of man, or rather person* (for there is no word for man in the original), this miracle proved Jesus Christ to be.

1. *This miracle proved Jesus to be both God and man, and therefore able to save us from our sins.* His humanity was essential to his mediatorial character, more especially, to his being capable of suffering and dying for us: and that he was indeed a man, appeared, as from many other circumstances, so particularly from his being subject to fatigue, and requiring rest—in a word, from his sleeping. But that he was more than man, and more than a prophet—that he was the Messiah, nay, the true God, was proved by the wonderful manner in which he acted on this occasion. The prophets and apostles were careful to disclaim the honour of the miracles they performed; and their miracles were so ordered as to lead the beholder to think of a far higher power than theirs. In dividing the sea, and in the other miracles of Moses, the Lord directed him how to proceed, and bade him take the rod in his hand, so that it was evident he was merely an instrument. The apostles speak of their miracles being done in the name of Christ, and by Christ. Thus, Peter said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up, and walk;" and to Æneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." But, as to Christ's own miracles, he left those who beheld them to conclude that they were his own, in the highest sense. There is, indeed, mention of the operation of the Father; but it is in a way which exalts the glory of the Son, as working in the same way. Thus, we read, in John v. 17; "Jesus answered, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

But, while all Christ's miracles thus proved him to be God as well as man, the miracle before us was a more than commonly striking proof of this, as it is declared to be the peculiar prerogative of God to rule the sea and the winds. "O Lord God of hosts," says the Psalmist, "who is a strong God like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."—"He walketh upon the wings of the wind."—"He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves:" and "he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." God only can rule the sea, and it is altogether vain for any creature to pretend to it. The well-known anecdote of Canute, king of England, has very deservedly obtained a place in history. Some of his flatterers, having exclaimed that everything was possible to him, he ordered his chair to be placed on the seashore, while the tide was rising, and sat down.

As the waters approached, he commanded them to retire, and to obey the voice of him who was lord of the ocean. But, when the sea still advanced towards him, and began to wet him with its billows, he turned to his courtiers, and said to them that every creature in the universe was feeble and impotent, and that power resided in one Being alone, in whose hands were all the elements of nature, and who could say to the ocean, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." But the sea did obey the command of the Redeemer; and it is hence for us to acknowledge him as Lord of all. When, on a somewhat similar occasion,* Christ walked on the sea, and calmed its raging billows, the disciples did well when they "worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." So let us acknowledge him, and praise him, and trust in him. He is indeed "mighty to save." As the Psalmist directs,† let us take him who is "the confidence of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea"—"who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people"—let us take this glorious person "for the God of our salvation." If we do so, all will be well.

2. This miracle proves that *the Redeemer never forgets his people, though he sometimes appears to do so*. The disciples reflected on Christ, as if the storm and his sleeping had been evidences that he did not care for them: but he was by no means unmindful of them. He might have prevented the storm altogether, or he might have remained awake, to lay it, before they applied to him; but he did neither: and yet he was truly mindful of them, both in the storm and in his sleeping; for thus an opportunity was afforded to try their faith, to lead them to prayer, and to enable him to interpose for their safety. By his providence, he was even caring for them all the while he was asleep: in respect of his divine nature, he knew what was passing, and was ready to prevent the foundering of the ship.

So he often appears, as it were, to stand by for a time, and to take no part in the trying affairs of his people. He allows, it may be, imminent perils to press on them, or painful and dangerous disease long to afflict them; so that they are ready to think, and to say, that he has forgotten them. Thus the Psalmist: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?"—"I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?" But the truth is, that he never forgets his people, however he may appear to do so. He is ever watching over their interests. He never slept, in this sense; and he never did, and never can, sleep at all, in respect of his divine nature. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep."—"He fainteth not, neither is weary." If there be any forgetfulness, it is on their part, and not on his. Nothing but weakness of faith can lead any of his children to suspect

* Matt. xiv. 33.

† Ps. lxxv. 5.

that he has, strictly speaking, forgotten them. Hear, on this subject, the Psalmist again: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Hear, too, the words in Isaiah: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

3. This miracle proves that *the Redeemer will certainly deliver his people at last*. What should hinder him?—not want of power, for he is "the mighty God," as this history abundantly shows—not want of knowledge, for he is infinitely wise to know how to save—not want of will, for he loves them, and delights to help them. He might prevent their trials altogether, or cut them very short; but he often brings them into trouble, and leaves them long in it, to let them feel their own weakness, to humble them, to wean them from the world, to teach them to look to him, and to get himself greater glory, and bring them to greater happiness, when he at last gives deliverance. He may delay long, but he will not delay too long. He will work for them at the proper time. Their extremity will be his opportunity. When they seem about to be cut off, then he will show himself. Therefore, "though the vision tarry," they may well wait for it, because "at the end it will speak and not lie; it will then surely come, and will not tarry."

Should any of the Saviour's true disciples feel tempted to fear that their great unworthiness may provoke him to leave them to perish for ever, let his conduct on this occasion convince them that neither the weakness of their faith nor any other infirmity will prevent him from delivering them. On this occasion he reproved his disciples for their fearfulness and little faith; but he did not, therefore, allow them to perish in the tempest. So still, when he sees the partial unbelief of any of his people, he is offended with it; but he does not therefore utterly forsake them. We read of his miraculously helping several who were by no means so confident in his power and love as they ought to have been. He cleansed the leper, who only said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He cast the deaf and dumb spirit out of the son of him who began with saying: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us;" and who was then led to cry out with tears: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" In like manner, the soul of every one who can, we do not say merely repeat the words, but who can, in truth, and from the heart say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," is safe. Let not this remark, however, be mistaken and abused. Wherefore is it that we thus speak? Is it that unbelievers may feel secure, or that

those who are fearful and of little faith may be satisfied? Far from it. It is that no true believer, however weak, may despair; and not only so, but that every true believer may be ashamed of the remainder of unbelief with which he is chargeable, and see good reason to put it away from him. A strange and a gross mistake it is, if any shall consider this remark as an apology for distrust in any degree. Surely, the truth that Christ will not leave the weak in faith to perish in sin, if rightly understood, implies that their fears are groundless, and, if sent home to their hearts, and properly followed out, must have a great effect in delivering them from these fears, and in leading them to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

How delightful, then, to think that Jesus will certainly deliver his people at last; and that he is able to save them, and will save them to the uttermost. Whatever storms may be raised against them by sin, Satan, and the world; and however insufficient they may be in themselves, he will help them, and bring them safe through. Well may they, therefore, thus express their confidence: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—"God is in the midst of his Church, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

4. This miracle proves that *Jesus is a being whom it is impiety and ruin to resist, but duty and happiness to obey*. Let those who are resisting Jesus, by neglecting his great salvation, and disobeying his commandments, consider that they heed not him whom the elements obey, and let them feel rebuked by the submissive winds and waves. What daring and desperate wickedness is theirs? How can they escape? How vain to contend with Him who can both raise and still the sea! O that they may become properly affected with their danger, and cry out, "Lord, save; we perish."

How becoming and safe, on the other hand, are the situation and demeanour of Christ's obedient people. Submitting to his righteousness and to his laws, obeying from the heart the form of doctrine he has delivered to them, let them study to become still more and more submissive, and desire that their every thought may be brought into captivity to his obedience. They are not indeed to expect exemption from trouble in the way of duty; but they may count on his gracious presence and assistance, and it will be their privilege to have their heart stayed, trusting in him. Embarked in his cause, they will find that he will be the pilot, and will guide the ship. Though their spiritual ark may be tossed with the tempest, it will never sink. Other vessels will be seen going to the bottom, or dashed in pieces on the rocks; but theirs will outride the storm. Many of life's voyagers will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;

but *they* will all reach Immanuel's land; and, safely moored in the port of heaven, they will know, to their unspeakable happiness, that the Lord Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.

As the whole of this subject is peculiarly appropriate to *seafaring people*, so a few words directly addressed to them may be a suitable conclusion. You, then, whose employment is to go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, and who are so often deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, be thankful that you are now here, and do not pass over this history without getting some good from it. The age of miracles is past; but it is still the age of providence and of grace, and there is much in the account of this miracle which ought to impress you. You are here, then, to-day; but to-morrow, or soon, you may be far at sea. Need I remind you of the thousands who have gone to sea, and never returned? Need I speak to you of the large addition which will be made to the rising throng, when the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, or of the bodies which, having been cast on shore, are mouldering in the earthy bed, whence the whistling winds shall no more rouse them? Need I say a word to you, who know so well of the deceitfulness of the deep, or recall to you, who have often seen it, how, though this hour it may be smooth as glass, the next it may be swelling into mountains? Though you may put to sea in fine weather, none can tell how soon a mighty storm of wind may come down upon you, and you may be reeling to and fro, and be at your wits' end: nay, none can tell how soon you may be in a watery grave. But tell me this—Are you ready? Do not shift the question. Let conscience give the answer. Most certainly, every man who is chargeable with such crimes as profane swearing, wilful neglect of ordinances, impurity, and intemperance, unrepented of, unforgiven, and unforsaken, ought at once to confess that he is not ready: and so also ought every man of you, who, though more decent, is yet in his natural state; that is, ignorant, unbelieving, and unrenewed. O listen to the warning voice now addressed to you—a voice which, if disregarded but this once, you may never hear again. Listen to the voice which now entreats you in the name of God, and of Christ, and of all that is dear to you through eternity, to be reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, to repent and be converted, before you venture to go to sea again. Begin, even now, thus earnestly to pray, “Lord save; we perish.” Yield yourselves up to his grace and guidance; and begin to live to his glory. Thus, when the time of sailing comes round again, you will go to sea, not indeed with the foolhardy boasting and profane merriment so unbecoming in those who have only a plank between them and eternity, but with the rational, calm, cheerful, Christian courage of those who trust in the Lord, and who feel that, whatever may happen during the voyage, all will be well with them for ever.

LECTURE XLII.

LUKE VIII. 26-39.

“ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains, and in fetters: and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear. And he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.”

MATTHEW and Mark both give us an account of this miracle, the former at the end of his 8th chapter, and the latter at the beginning of his 5th. Our Lord and his disciples, having, as we had occasion to consider in our last Lecture, passed over the Lake of Gennesaret, called also the Sea of Galilee, or of Tiberias, during which passage the tempest was miraculously stilled, “*arrived at*” that part of the coast opposite to Galilee, here called by Luke, as it is by Mark, “*the country of the Gadarenes.*” This appears to have been the same, or part of the same, country, which is called by Matthew “the country of the Gergesenes,” or, as the word is in the Old Testament, Gergashites. This territory is said to have belonged to the half-tribe of Manasseh, and to have been afterwards called Trachonitis.

When Jesus had gone ashore, “*there met him out of the city* (of Gadara) *a certain man who had devils*”—who was afflicted with a demoniacal possession. Matthew says that there met Christ “two men possessed with devils.” Though there may be an apparent, there is no real contradiction here. There were doubtless two men; but Mark and Luke mention only one of

them—the one, we must suppose, who was the speaker on the occasion, and the more remarkable of the two; and what he spoke he spoke both for himself, and for the other. Somewhat in this way it is, that certain things which were spoken by one of his disciples, Peter, for example, are represented as spoken by the disciples in general, and that Matthew speaks of both the malefactors reviling Christ, and Luke only of one of them.

Having taken occasion to defend the commonly received opinion as to the literal sense of demoniacal possessions, when considering the case of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue, mentioned in the 4th chapter, we shall now only remark, on that point, that the minutely circumstantial account here given of this case, is such as must have confirmed the Jews in their literal idea of possessions, and as cannot now but with the most unjustifiable violence be made to bear any other meaning. This will abundantly appear as we proceed.

Observe, here, that this was a very dreadful case. Various aggravating circumstances are stated. It was of long standing; the man had “*had devils long time.*” The inveteracy of the case rendered it more hopeless. The violence of the possession further appeared from such circumstances as these,—“*He ware no clothes.*” they could not prevail on him to go properly clad; but he tore his clothes, and went about naked, or almost naked. “*Neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs;*” he not only fled from his own house, but shunned every human dwelling, and took shelter in the tombs. Their sepulchres, or burying places, in the East, were generally caves dug into the earth, or into the sides of rocks and rising grounds, in places set apart for the purpose, and without the towns. These sepulchres were usually closed with a flat stone laid on their mouth. As some of them were sometimes left open, or in a state easy of access, they then afforded a lurking-place for robbers, and a place of shelter for wretched and houseless outcasts. Such a place of tombs was, no doubt, a retreat which well suited the gloomy disposition of this demoniac.

We may here take in the further description of his dismal case, in the latter part of the 29th verse: “*Oftentimes it had caught him*”—the satanic influence had come on him with extraordinary violence. On such occasions, his friends, or others, had endeavoured to restrain him, but in vain: “*he was kept bound in chains, and in fetters*”—(the former word signifies chains for the hands, and the latter chains for the feet);* “*and he brake the bands,*” both these kinds of chains, “*and was driven of the devil into the wilderness;*”—though he frequently resorted to the tombs, he sometimes ran wild into the common or waste country. His superhuman strength enabled him to burst asunder all bands, and to make his escape. Matthew says that the men, coming out of the tombs, “*were exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*” And Mark gives this, even still

* ἀλυσισι καὶ πιδαις.

more terrible, account of the more furious of the two: "He had his dwelling among the tombs: and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

Exceeding fierce, however, as he was, and untamable as he was by man, his violence soon fell before the presence of the Son of God. Verse 28: "*When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him.*" He was constrained to fall down, and do homage to him, before whom the devils believe and tremble. "*With a loud voice he said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God, most high?*" The devil could not have anything to do with Christ as a Saviour, and he did not desire to have anything to do with him in any way; and yet, in spite of himself, he had to do with him as his Lord and Judge. This testimony to the Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus, though it came from the father of lies, was a true testimony; and it was a glorious evidence to the divinity of the Saviour, as it came from that great enemy, who, however he might labour to deceive men, was quite capable of judging, and constrained, in this case, to declare the truth.—"*I beseech thee, torment me not,*" added he. He entreated a continuance of partial respite from that extreme suffering which he well knew awaited him at last. That this was the meaning, appears from the question of alarm recorded by Matthew: "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" This question was spoken in such a manner, and had such a distinct reference to the fate awaiting the fallen angels, that it could not possibly have been suggested by mere lunacy, and plainly indicated, if words have any meaning, the actual presence and agency of devils. The evangelist now states a circumstance which he had not introduced in the order of time, namely, that our Lord had "*commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man,*" previous to his expressing himself to the effect just mentioned. The demoniac, feeling that the command must be obeyed, had time, notwithstanding, to put in the forementioned request. And not only so, but, before the actual dispossession, "*Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name?*" He who knew all things, could not request an answer to remove any ignorance of his own; but the question was intended and contrived, to elicit important information, for the benefit of men. And the unclean spirit, using the man's organs of speech, "*answered, saying*" (according to Mark), "My name is Legion; for we are many:" or, as in Luke, he said, "*Legion: because many devils were entered into him.*" A legion was a body of Roman soldiers, not always consisting of the same number, though conveying the idea, pretty nearly, of a particular number. As we might say of a regiment of soldiers with us, that it consists of a thousand men, more or less; so we may say of the

Roman legion, that it contained six thousand men more or less. From this question and its answer, we may infer that the fallen angels have proper names; that they are orderly (we read, indeed, of their prince, and of the devil and his angels;) that they are arrayed in rebellion against God; and that they are very numerous and powerful. If so many evil spirits as deserved to be called a legion, were associated on this one occasion, their number altogether must be very great, and the subject relating to them must, as considered in itself, appear very alarming.

Luke tells us, in the 31st verse, and, changing the mode of description from the singular to the plural number, that the devils "*besought Christ that he would not command them to go out into the deep.*" The word in our language, which corresponds exactly with the original word here rendered "the deep," is "the abyss." The word signifies the bottomless place; and is used here as in other places, for hell, or the bottomless pit. It is the same word which is rendered "the bottomless pit" in the 9th, 11th, 17th, and 20th chapters of the Revelation. In 2 Pet. ii. 4, we read, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And in Jude, 6th verse: "The angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Taking these two passages in connexion with what we read here and elsewhere, of the agency of evil spirits on earth; and especially, considering what is said, in the Revelation, of the old serpent, the devil, or Satan, being at one time bound, and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and at another time "loosed out of his prison:" it appears that, though these fallen spirits are generally confined, yet some of them are occasionally permitted to go forth, and then remanded to prison; and that their final and universal imprisonment, and heaviest punishment, will take place at the day of judgment. These evil spirits, here at large, besought Christ that he would not immediately send them down to hell, but allow them to remain for some time on earth. According to Mark, the unclean spirit besought Christ much "that he would not send them away out of the country;" expressing a wish to continue, not only on earth, but in the particular region where they then were. There are some who, noticing what is said in the 10th chapter of Daniel, are of opinion that there are certain of the holy angels particularly concerned in the affairs of certain countries, under the direction of Michael, their prince, or some other leader; and also, certain of the fallen angels, under Satan, their prince. Alluding to this opinion, and speaking of the evil spirits mentioned in this passage, Doddridge has this note: "These, who perhaps were spirits of distinguished abilities, might be appointed to reside hereabouts, to oppose as much as possible the beneficial designs of Christ; and having

made their observations on the characters and circumstances of the inhabitants, they might be capable of doing more mischief here than elsewhere, and on that account might desire leave to continue on the spot."

While this was passing, there happened to be within their sight, though a good way off from them, "*an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain.*" Mark tells us that "they were about two thousand." The devils, knowing that Christ's permission was necessary, and that they were entirely subject to his restraint, "*besought him that he would suffer them to enter into the swine.*" In this request, they were, probably, influenced by a propensity to do mischief, and by the expectation of prejudicing the Gadarenes against Christ by the loss of property they would sustain. Our Lord permitted the devils to do as they had requested, saying unto them, "Go." "*Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine,*" &c.; such was the maddening power they exerted, that "*the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked*" in the waters. This most extraordinary and tremendous result proves, beyond a doubt, that the possession was literal, and that the dispossession was a real and miraculous dispossession, without any deceit or collusion.

The result of the miracle which our Lord now performed, cannot but strike the attentive reader as very different from the usual result of his miracles. His miracles were commonly miracles of kindness, in every sense—miracles by which even the temporal situation of men was much improved: but here the result was a great loss of property to the inhabitants of the country. At the same time, there was nothing in this to justify the insinuation of cruelty and injustice which infidels have sometimes thrown out; on the contrary, all this was a display of justice, wisdom, and mercy, on the part of our Lord. Not to insist on the distinction between the mere permission, and the actual agency, in this case—(a just and important distinction, however, else how could the character of God be vindicated in his permission of any moral evil?) though our Lord had destroyed this herd himself, and without any diabolical agency, he would have been perfectly justifiable in so doing; for this loss, be it observed, was a righteous punishment of the Gadarenes for their profane and illegal conduct in keeping such animals at all. Swine, you will be aware, were reckoned among the unclean animals by the law of Moses; and the Jews were positively prohibited from eating of their flesh. Their having them was, at least, a temptation to eat them: their keeping them at all, their breeding them, though it were only for the purpose of gain by selling them to Gentiles, was certainly inconsistent, if not with the letter, at least with the spirit, of the divine law; and in fact, there were enactments of the Jewish rulers,* declaring the keeping of swine to be infamous and illegal. The Gadarenes, then, were justly punished on this occasion. More-

* See proofs of this in Lightfoot's *Horæ* on Matt. viii. 30.

over, when we take into view the whole of this history—the merciful deliverance of the demoniacs, the illustration of the dignity and divine mission of Christ, and the influence which the miracle, with its accompaniments, ought to have had on the Gadarenes, and which it is still calculated to have on all who read it, in leading to saving faith and godly fear—we must perceive that there is here no exception to the usual beneficial tendency of Christ's miracles, but that this too is a miracle of kindness.

When the swine-feeders "*saw what was done,*" how the demoniacs were delivered, and the herd destroyed, "*they fled, and went and told it in the city,* that is, in the town of Gadara, "*and in the*" adjacent "*country.*" On this, many of the people "*went out to see*" what had happened, and to satisfy themselves by personal observation and inquiry. When they "*came to Jesus, they found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus,*" in the calm posture of an humble disciple, listening to his instruction. In the East the custom was, and still is, for the teacher to take his station in a central position, with the scholars seated on the ground, in a semicircle: of course, the scholars, while learning, would be literally at his feet; and we easily perceive how this way of speaking was adopted. Paul says that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, to intimate that he had been educated by Gamaliel. In the passage under consideration, the attitude may convey, in addition to this the idea of deep gratitude, reverence, and worship. And whereas formerly, the man tore his garments from off his body, and was in a state of complete frenzy, now they found him decently "*clothed, and in his right mind,*" restored to his senses and composed. When they beheld this, "*they were afraid;*" they were filled with that alarming amazement which usually comes on the irreligious at the consciousness of the presence of Deity, and the display of divine power. When they further learned, from those who had been present, all the particulars of the dispossession, and also of the destruction of the herd by the agency of the ejected demons, they were still more alarmed. "*Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about,*" together with the whole inhabitants of the city of Gadara, who are expressly mentioned by Matthew as coming out to meet Christ, and putting up this request—instead of being rejoiced at the presence of so glorious a person, and beseeching him to remain with them, that they might learn of him the way of life eternal; preferring their worldly and sordid gain to the good of their souls, grieved and offended at the loss which they had already sustained, and afraid of additional judgments, blindly, ungratefully, and basely, "*besought him to depart from them,*" or, as it is expressed by the other evangelists, "*to depart out of their coasts*"—to leave their country altogether. This wicked request he, in just judgment, complied with, and immediately went on board the ship, to return to the other side of the lake.

Very different was the desire of the man for whom the gracious deliverance was wrought. When he saw Jesus about to cross over, he proposed to accompany him, and "*besought him that he might be*" allowed to continue "*with him;*"—influenced, no doubt, both by gratitude for the past, and by a concern for his safety and benefit for the future. Jesus, however, being the best judge of what in such circumstances was most becoming, and best adapted to promote the great design which he had ever in view, did not allow the man to accompany him, but "*sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published*" not only to his own house, but "*throughout the whole city,*" nay, according to Mark, in all Decapolis—a region in which, (as the word signifies) were ten cities—"how great things Jesus had done for him." The people, knowing his former wretched condition, marvelled at the great change effected on him.* Thus, this most miserable, most dreaded, and most abhorred man, became, by divine power and grace, the most interesting and useful person in all the country. He continued a living demonstration of the Saviour's power and mercy, and a constant preacher, so to speak, of his fame; and we may believe that he was the means of gaining for Christ and his disciples a more favourable reception with some of the people, when they next visited those regions.

In reconsidering this part of sacred history, with a view to our own edification, in the present circumstances of the world, it may be observed,

1. *That we see, in this miserable demoniac, a striking picture of every man who is under the influence of Satan, in the spiritual sense.* It is true that Satan, though he may influence the human body in a way of which we are not aware, is not now permitted to take possession of men in the same known and obvious way as formerly in the days of Christ. But let us beware of the infidel and profane sentiment and conduct of the modern Sadducees, who say that there is neither angel nor spirit, good or bad, who look on the idea of Satan as a mere personification of moral evil;† and who, instead of being roused to holy jealousy at the very thought of the devil, interlard their wicked conversation with his name, and consider the mention of his name as a proof of wit in themselves, and a call for merriment in others. The fact is, that those who think and speak lightly of the great enemy of God and man, have generally no scruple to profane the name of God himself, and are destitute of any proper impression of the evil of sin, and of the nature and the importance of salvation. They err, most egregiously, if any regard be due to the Word of God. The references in Scripture to the personal existence and agency of the devil, as the head of a multitude of apostate angels, are most express and very numerous. Satan is

* Mark.

† See Lecture on Luke iv. 1-13.

spoken of as "going to and fro throughout the earth," and as "going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Those who are living in sin are represented as encouraged in it by him, and are spoken of as "taken captive by him at his will." In a way which cannot be exactly understood or explained, he entices them to iniquity. He sinks them in sin, which is the uncleanness of the soul. All who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (and this includes all who "walk according to the course of this world," and, of course, all who are in their natural state), are described as walking "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The external symptoms of the demoniacal possession at Gadara may have been more shocking than are now those of most enslaved sinners, but this can hardly be said as to the reality of the case. In all cases their state is dismal in itself—in some it is peculiarly horrid in the mode of its development. Was this demoniac neither to be bound nor tamed? and do not sinners often throw off all the restraints of reason and religion, and shame, and their friends, and human authority, and proceed desperately in their career of iniquity? Do not they "take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?" Was this demoniac driven by the devil, from the abodes of men, into the tombs and the wilderness?—and does he not still drive the abandoned away from all intercourse with God, and good society, into the haunts of corruption, and the wastes of the world? Do not sinners still, like this unclean spirit, say to Christ, if not in words, yet in the tenor of their wishes and actions, "What have we to do with thee?" Do they not desire to be let alone, and to continue as they are? Do not they desire to remain without the reach of the light, lest it should torment them, lest it should disturb them in their career, and make them melancholy? Was this demoniac reduced to a state of complete lunacy, so as to be a terror to others, and a torment to himself?—who are so mad as they who, in their mental delirium, mistake entirely their true interest, do all they can to spread moral ruin around them, and, in defiance of every remonstrance, rush headlong on their own perdition? So varied and numerous are the evil propensities which agitate them, that it may be truly said, Their name is Legion, for they are many. Even when the outward manifestations are not very striking, the inward sway of the wicked one may be complete; for he cunningly adapts his mode of procedure to the different turns of his deluded and degraded subjects. And, though this demoniac was happily delivered from Satan's sway, he always seeks the utter ruin of men's souls and bodies; and it is truly terrible to think that, in his destruction of the herd of swine, there is furnished an appalling emblem of the end to which he is driving all his vassals, and of the perdition into which he will actually precipitate them, if they continue to give themselves up to his dominion.

He will destroy them in a lake—even “the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Now, seeing these things are so, ought you not all anxiously to inquire whether you be, in the spiritual sense, delivered from Satan, or not? If you are practically slaves to known sin, you ought to conclude, at once, that you are his captives. And if you are merely in a careless state, you ought to come to the same conclusion, for he is only managing you in a quieter way. Do not conclude that you are delivered, merely because you may have felt some convictions and terrors. This unclean spirit could fall down before Christ, and deprecate his wrath; and yet he continues an unclean spirit still. The devils believe the coming wrath, and tremble. Extorted cries for deliverance from the abyss are not enough, though, probably, few of you go even so far as that. You must desire and obtain freedom from the guilt and power of sin itself, in God's own way—that is, by faith in the atonement of Christ, and the regenerating grace of his spirit; you must obtain pardon and holiness, else your misery, though it may be delayed for a time, will come at last. Think not that you can resist the authority of the Judge of all. When a whole legion of rebellious spirits, every one of them naturally more powerful than you, were fain to yield him trembling submission, well may the most stout-hearted of you be afraid. Safe and happy are they, and they only, who are “delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.”

2. Let us, from this subject, *mark with satisfaction, the ability and readiness of Christ to control and to destroy the power of Satan.* It seems likely that, if it had not been for the restraint of divine power, these malicious spirits would have destroyed, not only the property, but the lives, of the Gadarenes; and we may remark, in general, that we ought always to feel indebted to the Lord for the protection we enjoy from the malice of evil spirits. Considering the outward protection afforded by Providence, and by the employment of holy angels, we have no occasion to be too much alarmed by the fear of Satan. Fierce and terrific as these unclean spirits were to others, they were calm before our Lord, and departed at his command. And so it will be always. We should remember, too, that in the most important sense, including our spiritual deliverance, “the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

“He spoiled principalities, and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in his cross:” and with this great and decisive victory is connected the final triumph of all his people. Satan may sift them as wheat; but the Saviour prays for them, that their faith fail not. Satan may tempt them to sin, but he cannot force them; nay, they are secured against his attacks so far as they shall not prove fatal. Though they wrestle, not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places ; yet, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and taking unto them the whole armour of God, they shall be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And, as this is very encouraging to those who are already delivered from the power of darkness, so it is, if properly considered, very encouraging for those who are yet under that power, to hope and to strive for deliverance, through Jesus' name, and in his strength. No man need say, or think, that he is "sold to do iniquity," or that his case is hopeless, if he will only apply to Christ for deliverance. Though the devil, like a strong man, keep the palace of the heart, Jesus is stronger than he, to overcome him, to take from him all his armour wherein he trusts, and to divide his spoils. Let this be well considered by those who are under his bondage, and then "peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

3. *There are various traits in the character of the Gadarenes, in which we ought carefully to guard against resembling them.* For example, their covetousness, which led them to pursue gain in an illegal and disreputable way. When men addict themselves supremely to filthy lucre, there is no meanness, or worthlessness, of which they will not be guilty. Let us also guard against preferring, like them, our worldly gain to the good of our souls, the prosperity of the Gospel, and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom. As they seem to have imputed their loss to Christ, and not to the evil spirits, and as it has been common for Infidels to throw on Christianity itself the odium of those calamities of which wicked men and Satan have made it the innocent occasion ; let us reject every sentiment of this kind, remembering that many more and much heavier mischiefs would have arisen, had the restraints of Christianity been removed, and giving the praise and blame where they are respectively due. Especially, let us guard against the spirit which influenced the Gadarenes, when they besought Christ to depart out of their coasts. This was truly a diabolical spirit ; and this request proved them to be, though in a different form, yet as much under the influence of Satan, as were the poor demoniacs. Perhaps the closest resemblance to this which has been exhibited in our times, is to be found in some who, having gone abroad from Christian countries into heathen lands for mere worldly reasons, have, in order that they might be left to pursue their ungodly gains and swinish pleasures undisturbed, set themselves to oppose the introduction of Christianity, and, in as far as they could, to rid the country altogether of Christ and his faithful preachers. It is reason of thankfulness that the progress of light has now rendered this display of enmity against the gospel more rare, and shamed many of its opposers into silence. Something of this spirit, however, in reference to their own case, is natural to all unrenewed men ; "they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the know-

ledge of thy ways." Let all such remember that the Gadarenes were punished by Christ by being granted their request. Nor may it be altogether irrelevant to remark, that the Gadarenes, as a community, were, in the righteous judgment of God, signally punished, as for their sins in general, so in particular, for their rejection of Christ; for Josephus, who describes Gadara as a place of considerable importance, relates that it was the first town which, after suffering dreadful hardships, was taken by the Roman army, in the fatal war of Vespasian.* Direful, however, as was that calamity, it will be far surpassed by the ruin which, at the last day, shall overtake those to whom, as they persevered all their time on earth, in saying to Christ, "Depart from us," he will then say, "Depart from me."

Finally, *The situation and conduct of this man, after he was dispossessed, are very instructive as to the state and duty of the converted.* Did the unclean spirit go out of the body of this man?—so, Satan loses his paramount influence over the souls of the converted, the Saviour is enthroned in their hearts, and always, when they resist the devil, he flees from them. Was this man found sitting at the feet of Jesus?—so also Mary "sat at his feet, and heard his words;" and so it is the delight of all his true disciples to wait on him, in an humble, reverential, and inquiring posture of mind. Was this man delivered from his frenzy, and restored to his right mind?—so, whatever may be imagined to the contrary, it is when sinners become believing, holy, and deeply serious, that they cease to be foolish, and become truly rational and sober. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." Paul says of himself, and all true believers, "God hath given us"—"the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Did this man desire to remain with Christ?—so it is the desire of all his people to be much with him in his ordinances, and to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." This they are allowed to be, and to do, in a good measure. But they have various duties to attend to; and, in particular, as the man, according to Christ's direction, returned, and showed to his house, and fellow-citizens, and fellow-countrymen, the great things which the Lord had done for him, so all Christians are, more or less, useful to their friends, and to society at large; and it not unfrequently happens that some who, in the days of their ignorance and folly, were noted for their opposition to religion, become, by the converting grace of God, peculiarly useful, and like Onesimus, though "in time past unprofitable, yet now profitable" to many. Indeed, a chief reason why men are not generally taken immediately to heaven after their conversion, seems to be, that their continuance on earth may manifest the power of divine grace, and promote the cause of religion in the world. See here, then, Christians, your pleasing duty. Show how great things the Lord hath done for you. Show this, on proper occasions, by a simple,

* Josephus' Jewish Wars, Book iv.

humble, and grateful statement in words. Say, with the Psalmist, "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Show this, especially, by the silent yet eloquent language of a holy, charitable, and devoted life. Seek to be much with Christ in the enjoyment of public and private religious exercises : yet be ready to deny yourselves, even as to these, when, by so doing, you are called on, by the voice of providence, to promote the good of others. Live, in every respect, as it becomes the spiritually emancipated and redeemed ; and consecrate, with hearty good-will, and with all your might, to the glory of your Saviour, those powers which he has rescued from a state of bondage, perversion, and degradation, and renovated for the noble service and blissful enjoyment of himself.

LECTURE XLIII.

LUKE VIII. 40-56.

“And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him; for they were all waiting for him. 41. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. (But as he went the people thronged him. 43. And a woman, having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd. 45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him, before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.) 49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52. And all wept, and bewailed her; but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.”

OUR Lord, having dispossessed the demoniacs at Gadara, left the country, at the request of its unbelieving and worldly inhabitants, and crossed over the lake to Galilee, whence he had lately come. There the people, awakened, at least in some degree, by his former instructions and miracles, were anxiously waiting for him, and gladly received him on his arrival. And is not this the posture of mind which at this moment becomes us? Now that we are again in the place in which he is wont to come unto his people and bless them, ought we not to be waiting for, and ready to welcome, his gracious spiritual presence?—From Matthew’s account, it seems that certain things occurred after our Lord’s return, on which, however, as they are not stated here by Luke, we shall not enter. The passage now read describes two miracles, the account of which is interwoven by this evangelist, as it also is by Matthew and Mark.

The first miracle here described is that of the restoration of Jairus’ daughter to life. As the only mention of this man occurs in the history of this miracle, we know nothing more of him than what is gathered from this source. Jairus is the Old

Testament Hebrew name Jair, with the Greek termination added by Mark and Luke; and the name signifies, my light, or, who enlightens, or, is enlightened. This "*Jairus*" was "*a ruler of the synagogue.*" The rulers of the synagogues presided in the government, and directed the worship, in the synagogues; and they also acted as local magistrates, subordinate to the Sanhedrim, or great council of Seventy, which sat in Jerusalem. There appear to have been generally several of them connected with each synagogue, though one of these was the chief. The synagogue here meant, must have been the synagogue in Capernaum, where Jesus now was. Matthew informs us, in the first verse of his 9th chapter, that when Jesus had passed over the lake, he "came into his own city:" now, we are to recollect that, though he spent his early years in Nazareth, and was therefore called Jesus of Nazareth, yet it is stated, in Matt. iv. 13, "that leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast."

A person of note and of worth, as Jairus was, he was not, however, exempt from trouble, but was visited with a severe domestic trial. His daughter, and what added greatly to the affliction, his only daughter, and what was even more trying still, his "*only daughter,*" after she had reached the age of "*twelve years,*" and had, of course, made much progress, and become peculiarly interesting and dear to him, so that to her continuance with him he was looking forward as the chief comfort of his remaining days on earth, was grievously ill, and "*lay a-dying.*" In this most anxious conjuncture, Jairus, wisely and happily, bethought himself of applying to Jesus, whose powerful and gracious works he had heard of, and, probably, partly witnessed. Coming to him, "*he fell down at Jesus' feet,*" in deep humility, or as it is in Matthew, "worshipped him:" "*and besought him that he would come into his house.*" According to Matthew, Jairus said, "My daughter is even now dead" (that is, she was in the last extremity, and given over, when he left the house, and he considered her the same as dead); "but come, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." Matthew also says that "Jesus arose" (for it appears that he was sitting in a house, probably in Matthew's house), "and followed him," that is, Jairus, and "so did his disciples." Our Lord readily complied with the ruler's request, and set out immediately for his house. But we must suspend our further consideration of this part of the history, till we consider the very interesting event which occurred by the way.

"*As he went the people thronged him.*" While they were crowding around, and anxious to see what would be the result of the ruler's application, a poor woman, who had been, for a long time, even "*twelve years,*" afflicted with "*an issue of blood;*" who "had suffered a great deal from many physicians," * by

* Mark v. 26.

painful restraints and disagreeable medicines; and who "*had spent all her living upon physicians, and yet could not be healed of any*"—who "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse"—"*came*" in the press, "*behind him, and touched the border of his garment.*" According to the divine law,* the Jews were directed to "make fringes in the borders of their garments," and to "put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue," "that they might look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." This seems to have been the part of our Lord's garment which this poor woman touched. We formerly read, in Luke vi. 19, that "the whole multitude sought to touch Christ; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all." It was publicly known, then, that many had been cured in this way; and this woman's knowledge of the fact led her to expect a cure accordingly. She, no doubt, betrayed much weakness in the way of her proceeding; for it was folly to imagine that she could touch him without his knowledge, or that the mere touch could have efficacy of itself, without his special cognizance and voluntary agency. There was much, however, that was excellent in her procedure. It discovered much humility, for it was as if she thought that she was unworthy to meet him in the face, and that all she ought to presume to do was to touch his garment from behind. There was also great faith in her case; for Matthew tells us, that "she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole:"—she was fully persuaded that she would be healed, if she could only get forward to touch his garment. Accordingly, Jesus graciously overlooked all her weakness, and vouchsafed her an instantaneous and complete cure. "*Immediately her issue of blood stanch'd,*" and she felt that she was healed of that distemper.

On this, Jesus turned round, and said, "*Who touched me?*" It was, not because he needed information, that he put the question; but it was that he might draw forth a confession from the woman, and consult the advancement of his own blessed cause among the people. "*When all denied*"—when none would confess that they had touched Christ, at least with any particular design, "*Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?*"—how is it possible, in such circumstances, but that many must touch thee? Jesus, however, would not rest satisfied with this reply, but said, "*Somebody hath touched me,*"—and that, too, with an important object in view;—"for I perceive that virtue," that is, healing power, divine energy, "*has gone out of me,*" or proceeded forth from me. Jesus was looking round again to discover the person, and probably directed his eye to the woman; and "*when the woman saw that she was not hid,*" (how indeed could she be hid from him who knew what is in man, who needed not that any should testify to him, who

* Numb. xv. 38.

knew all things?) "*she came trembling,*" afraid, probably, that he would be offended by her having presumed to touch him, when she was ceremonially unclean, and also by her having obtained a cure in a surreptitious manner: "*and falling down before him,*" "she told all the truth," *—"she declared unto him before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately." Our blessed Saviour, instead of expressing displeasure, spoke to her in the most kind and consolatory way. He addressed her by the affectionate appellation of "*Daughter;*" he exhorted her to "*be of good comfort;*" he told her that "*her faith,*" which he noticed with approbation, had instrumentally "*made her whole;*" and he dismissed her, with the gracious words, "*Go in peace.*" It was indeed a great deliverance which was conferred on her, when she was healed of a disease which, by ceremonial prohibition, cut her off from the public services of religion, and which was wasting her body, and would soon have brought her to the grave: when, however, we consider all the favourable features in her case, and especially the way in which Christ addressed her, we cannot but trust that a greater deliverance still was conferred on her—that through faith she was delivered from the spiritual pollution of sin, and introduced into a state of acceptance, and peace with God.

Before leaving this miracle, let us consider some of the lessons which it reads to us. We may observe, then, that the afflicted state of this poor, diseased woman, should remind us that we are all individually *exposed to various painful and fatal bodily disorders*, because of our departure from God. Let the consideration of this fact make us humble and serious; and let it, especially, lead us so to view and to improve the scriptural representation of the cause of our exposed condition, as that we may return to the Lord.

Let us also, from this case, be reminded of the *distinction between the province of the physician and the province of God*. This woman was not to be blamed for applying to physicians for aid; nay, she would have been to blame if she had neglected this; but she was blamable if, as seems to have been the case, she resorted to physicians, with excessive anxiety, and to the exclusion of a proper regard to the providence and power of the Most High. It is this which is marked against Asa,† when it is said: "Asa was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Let us ever look to God, then, even for bodily healing; and let this history teach us that, as in other things, so in the cure of diseases, what is impossible with man is possible with God.

But let us also *improve this miracle figuratively and spiritually*. More dreadful and more defiling than any disease to the body, is sin to the soul. Under the influence of this disease all men

* Mark.

† 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

are born, and with some it is of long standing. As ceremonial uncleanness cut off Jews from the services of the temple, and from free intercourse with men; so this abominable thing separates from the enjoyment of God, and from the fellowship of the saints. When under its power, men may, indeed, be now bodily present in the house of God, but their souls can hold no communion with him. This disease impairs, and if not checked, must destroy the whole man.

Again, we are reminded, that when the existence of this spiritual disease forces itself on men's notice, they are *too apt to have recourse to inadequate means of cure*. They are ready to mistake the means altogether; or to rest in the proper means, to the neglect of the great Agent. It is astonishing, and melancholy, to think of the aversion many discover to the true method of salvation. In order to allay their fears, some have recourse to amusements, others to engrossing worldly cares, and others to intemperance; but all in vain, for their fears soon return with double strength. Others, with some appearance of attention to the true way of life and peace, have recourse to good resolutions, to external duties, to mortifications, and to various forms of self-righteousness. Yet, all these persons, notwithstanding all these expedients, are spiritually nothing bettered, but rather worse. They will do any thing rather than apply to Christ; and it is only when all other trials fail that they will try him. All other medicines but the blood of Christ, however, and all other spiritual physicians but Christ himself, are medicines and physicians "of no value."

But, further, this case shows that *no sinner, however inveterate his case may be, need despair of a cure*, if he will apply to Christ, in faith. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."—"His blood cleanses from all sin;" and he is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

Consider these things well, all of you. Consider these things, you who have no suitable concern about your spiritually diseased state, and no suitable desire for deliverance from it. When your bodies are sick, how anxious do you become! what pains and expense do you undergo to obtain relief! If nothing else would do, you would give up anything for recovery. "Skin upon skin," one piece of valuable property after another, "nay, all that you have, would you give for your life." And yet then your recovery would be uncertain; for you might become worse and worse, and die after all. Here, however, the disease is far more dreadful; and a cure, a certain cure, may be had, without money and without price. Be no longer, then, so infatuated as to remain insensible to the disease which is preying on you; but come, as perishing sinners, to the great Physician of souls. We are borne out by the spirit of this passage in saying to you: Come, come now; come as you are; come with all your uncleanness and all your weakness; come any way, rather than not come at all.

And now, the pleasing idea presents itself, that in the crowd, who have come hither to see Jesus, so to speak, and who are thronging around, there may be some individual who is groaning under the burden of spiritual disease, and anxious to approach Christ, that he may take it away. A welcome to thee, thou heavy laden soul! a welcome, in the name of Him who healed and saved this poor woman. Thy case may not be thought of by those around thee, and no human being may be aware of the thoughts which are passing in thy mind, or of the object thou hast in view. But adhere to thy purpose, and hesitate not to put it into execution. Come now, approach, and touch the Saviour. Art thou ready to say, "I know that if I but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole; and if I could only see him, and get near him, quickly and gladly would I stretch out my trembling hand: but I see him not—I see him not as once he appeared in Capernaum's synagogue, or passed along its streets, surrounded by the admiring throng—I see not his flowing robe with the border, nor his fringe with the riband of blue?"—Nay, but say not so, for thou thyself knowest better. It is the bringing of thy mind in contact, by faith, with gospel truth as it is in Christ, of which we are speaking; and this is as practicable now as ever. Jesus is not visible in our assembly, or on our streets; but his glorious character and finished work are described in his Word, and published in his preached Gospel. Take, then, for true the declarations of the God of truth. Rely on the grace of the Saviour. Touch his garment thus, and virtue will go forth from him to heal thee. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach); "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

For the encouragement and direction of believers, the following things may be merely noticed, as suggested by this miracle. There is virtue in everything that relates to Christ; there is an efficacy in every part of his character; it being with him as it was with Aaron, of whom it is said, that the sacred oil poured on his head descended even to the skirts of his garment. We learn, too, here, that while there are different degrees of faith, and Christ is most honoured by the strongest, yet he does not reject the weakest. Again, we see that from whatever cause trembling may come on believers, they cannot do better than cast themselves at his feet, and tell him the whole truth. It is surely pleasant, also, to think that all his believing people, whatever be their progress, are regarded by him as his sons and daughters. And finally, they are here reminded that they ought not to seek to conceal their obligations to his grace, but are called on so to speak and act, that it may be seen that virtue has proceeded from him to heal them, and that men may "take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus."

But let us proceed to the sequel of the other miracle, for this

passage is a complication of wonders. The miracle performed on this poor woman, though it may have delayed our Lord in his progress for a short time, must have had an animating effect on the expectations of Jairus, in reference to his daughter. But while Jesus was thus speaking to the woman, "*there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master*"—for so they respectfully styled our Lord. Whether this intelligence altogether destroyed the hope of Jairus, or not, does not certainly appear, though fear was arising in his mind; it is manifest, however, that this messenger, and those who accompanied him (for there appear, from Mark, to have been others with him), however they might have supposed that Christ might have prevented the death of the girl, had he arrived in time, had no idea of his restoring her to life, and therefore considered that to have asked him to go to the house now would have been to put him to useless trouble. "*But when Jesus heard it, he answered him,*" that is, he replied to what was passing in Jairus' mind, "*saying, Fear not*"—notwithstanding this intelligence, be not discouraged; "*believe only*"—believe in the miraculous power which I exercise—"and she shall be made whole"—she shall yet be restored, not only to life, but to perfect health. You must have observed that this kind of faith, or, more correctly, the belief of this kind of truth, the belief that Christ could and would perform the miracle, was generally required, on the part of the person to be wrought on, or of the person applying for another; and this seems to have been required, though not as absolutely necessary in the nature of things to a bodily cure, yet as a proper feeling and acknowledgment of our Lord's divine character.

Jesus now proceeded to Jairus' house; and, in doing so, he dismissed the crowd. "*And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.*" Jairus, the father, was with him, as we have seen; and it would seem, from the statement of the circumstance of the mother going in with them, that she had met them near the house. Our Lord took a competent number of witnesses with him; and yet not so many as might be inconvenient in the house, or have the appearance of ostentation. The three disciples here mentioned had a similar distinction conferred on them, when they only, of all the twelve, were taken to be witnesses of our Lord's transfiguration and agony.

Verse 52: "*And all wept and bewailed her.*" According to Mark, when our Lord went in, "he saw the tumult, and them that wept, and wailed greatly;" and, according to Matthew, "he saw the minstrels," that is, musicians, or, still more literally, flute-players, "and the people making a noise." When death happened in a Jewish family, they were usually visited by their acquaintances, who came to condole with them; and they were also accustomed to send for persons who were pro-

fessional mourners, and who being hired for the purpose, exerted themselves to express and excite grief. Of these, some set up dismal wailings with their voices, and others played melancholy airs on musical instruments. This practice prevailed so much among them at times, as to partake rather of heathenish than of truly religious manners.* Various references to the employments of such hired mourners and musicians, on melancholy occasions, occur in Scripture. Thus, in Jer. ix. 17: "Call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for the cunning women, that they may come; and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters."

When our Lord saw and heard all this dismal mourning, he said, "*Weep not;*" or, as in Mark, "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" Heavy as was the affliction, and even though the girl was supposed to have been irrecoverably gone, such abandoned and noisy grief was altogether unbecoming in those who professed to know the true God, and to entertain the hope of immortality. Especially in this case, when an almighty Deliverer stood by, and help might have been expected, and was coming, such conduct ought not to have been. "Give place," added Christ; "retire, make way, that I may see her." "*She is not dead, but sleepeth.*" She was not dead so as to be irrecoverably lost to this world; her state, who was so soon to awake, might, even more naturally than in usual cases of death be compared to a sleep. On this the mourners and others, knowing that she was really dead, in the usual sense of the expression, "*laughed him to scorn,*" were so rude and inconsiderate as to deride him; yet this unseemly conduct served as a confirmation of the reality of the miracle, and of its being an actual resurrection from the dead. Then our Lord having "*put them all out*"—that is, all those who, having derided him, showed themselves to be unworthy to witness such a sight—"taketh," as we are told by Mark, "the father and the mother of the damsel, and them," that is, the three disciples that were with him, "and entereth in where the damsel was lying." "*And he took her by the hand, and called, saying,*" in Syriac, "Talitha, Cumi;" which is, being interpreted, "*Maid, arise.*" Without prayer, and in his own name he gave the command; and the command being accompanied with his almighty power, was instantly obeyed. So, the call of the word to souls dead in sin, accompanied by his divine grace, becomes effectual; and so, at the last day, all the dead who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth. "*Her spirit came again.*" This form of expression is justly considered corroborative of the idea of souls living and acting in a state of separation from the body, and of their being again united to the body at the resurrection. Not only did her spirit

* The Greeks made a great noise with brazen vessels. The Romans made a prodigious noise with the voice (*Conclamatio*) for eight days: at the end of which period the phrase was used, *Conclamatum est*—It is all over.

come again, but "*she arose straightway ;*" she was restored, not only to life, but to health, so as to be able to rise and walk. And, in further proof of her complete restoration, and also to show that though her life had been restored miraculously, it was to be sustained in the ordinary way, "*he commanded to give her meat.*" No wonder that "*her parents,*" and all present, "*were astonished.*" We may be sure, too, that her parents were filled with exceeding great joy. The report of such a miracle would, doubtless, get abroad ; but, as his hour was not yet come, Jesus was studious to avoid furnishing his enemies prematurely with a handle against him ; and, therefore, "*he charged*" those who were present "*that they should tell no man what was done.*"

And now, let the history of this miracle remind us that all families are exposed to domestic trouble. Let none forget that into their tabernacle, in which nought but health is now seen, wasting disease may soon enter ; and that there the sound of rejoicing may soon be changed into the voice of them that weep. An affectionate family is like the human body ; "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." None can tell how soon they may be called to suffer heavily in this way ; none have any security but that the nearest and dearest connection may soon be laid on the bed of sickness and of death. How much, then, does it concern all the members of every family, who are arrived at the age of accountableness, to be living in the faith of the gospel, and in the discharge of relative duty ; so that, if a separation should take place, there may be good hope with regard to those who depart, and no bitter remorse on account of habitually neglected duty in those who remain !

This passage will be felt to be applicable, in a very exact and peculiarly affecting manner, to those parents who have one only daughter, and she arrived at some such interesting age as was that of Jairus' daughter. Such parents may have, as it were, their life bound up in the life of their child, and may be ready to say of her, in reference to coming years, "This same shall comfort us." But let them see to it that their affection be an enlightened, Christian affection, including a practical regard to the spiritual welfare of their daughter, and that their expectations from her be accompanied with a proper sense of the insufficiency and uncertainty of all created comforts, lest they find, when too late, that they have been leaning on a weak and brittle reed, which, in breaking, pierces them to the heart.

But not to pursue so close a parallel as this any further, we may say more generally that this history suggests much instruction to parents, in regard both to the sickness, and to the death, of advanced children. As it is right, when their children are dangerously ill, that they should feel a strong desire for the preservation of their life, let them here learn that, while they are to use proper natural means, they should call in the aid of divine power and grace. In the exercise of private and

family prayer, they should fall down at Jesus' feet, and beseech him to come into their house. They should beseech him to come, in the exercise of his ordinary providential power, to recover the sick; and they should beseech him to come, in the enlightening, pardoning, sanctifying, and comforting influences of his grace, as to all the members of the family, so especially to the afflicted object of their solicitude. If they proceed in this way, restoration to health, if it come (and this is the way in which it is most likely to come), will come as a blessing to all concerned; and, on the supposition of a fatal issue, their prayers for Christ's presence, and his gracious visit, will not be in vain; for they will be the means of enabling the dying to die in peace, and of forming the survivors to right views, and the proper improvement of the painful bereavement.

We say, too, that there is here much instruction to parents when they are bereaved of children. It cannot be but that nature must feel, and feel keenly, on such occasions; and it cannot have been the intention of Him who himself wept at the grave of Lazarus, entirely to prohibit the feeling and expression of grief in others; but it ought to be observed, that he decidedly disapproves of his people abandoning themselves to excessively noisy, or guilty, inconsolable grief. Such grief is known to be characteristic of heathens; but it is unworthy of Christians; and it has been, in fact, very much checked by the prevalence of Christian principles and hopes. Christians who are overwhelmed in this way, are indeed to be pitied; but they may justly consider themselves to be thus gently reprovèd by their Lord, "Why make ye this ado, and weep?" In all ordinary cases, death, when it comes, should be felt as settling the question of relative anxiety; it shows plainly what is the will of God; and they ought all to beware of indulging a feeling, or uttering an expression, of rebellion. The matter is then determined; and it is for believers to submit, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." David said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Besides, extravagant grief is altogether unworthy of those who believe the doctrines, and entertain the hopes, of a glorious resurrection and a blessed immortality. Of all who die in the Lord, it may still be said, in the sense our Saviour intended, that they are not dead, but sleep. They are not, indeed, to be restored immediately; but we have only to look forward to the morning of the resurrection to see them awaking, even as to their bodies, to renewed life and endless felicity. And what a consolation is this! In the words of Paul to the Thessalonians

—“ I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others, who have no hope. For if ye believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” — “ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” How great, in this view, the consolation of the Christian!

Faithfulness, however, requires the statement that none can scripturally partake of this consolation but those who, through Christ, are in a state of acceptance with God, and conscientiously exerting themselves for the salvation of their relatives. With regard to those who either plainly die in sin, or even die without having given any evidence of grace—it is a most delicate point to speak of them at all—and in most cases of the kind, probably the less that is said the better. But this we may say without hesitation, that, in every light in which we can possibly regard the death of ourselves, or of our friends, there may be seen the strongest reason for our seeking to become possessed of the privileges and character, that we may die the death of the righteous ourselves; and also for our doing every thing we can, by advice, example, and prayer, to make our friends such as, in the prospect of their death, the enlightened Christian would wish them to be. If we would avoid the most distressing reflections, and enjoy the best consolations, when those whom we love leave the world before us; and if we would save those whom we love, and are to leave behind us, the most painful apprehensions, and enable them, on rational and scriptural principles, to think of us with pleasure when we are gone;—let us all be wise in time. Let us thankfully avail ourselves of the pardoning and sanctifying grace provided for us in the gospel; let us encourage each other in the way of life; and let us seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, in the way of a patient continuance in well-doing

LECTURE XLIV.

LUKE IX. 1-9.

“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, nor money; neither have two coats apiece. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them. 6. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; 8. And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets had risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but whom is this of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.”

OUR Lord had now, for a considerable time, been diligently employed in going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the kingdom of God, and healing all diseases among the people. He could not, however, in his human nature, be in more places than one, at a time; so that his personal exertions were necessarily limited: he, therefore, formed the gracious design to institute means for the still more extensive and more rapid diffusion of the gospel. We learn, from the corresponding part of the history, as given by Matthew,* that “when Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he to his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” It is a promising sign that the Lord intends some signal mercy to his Church, when he stirs up believers to pray for it: and so it proved here. In fact, Christ had already certain men in training for the important work of public teachers, namely, the twelve. They had been called to discipleship in the early part of his ministry; and we have seen a particular account of the calling of some of them. We found, too, in the 6th chapter from the 13th verse, how he called unto him all his disciples, and from among them chose these twelve, whom he named apostles, that is, messengers. We there had a list of the names, and took occasion to give a short history of the lives, of the apostles. The 9th chapter, on which we are now entering, begins with an account of the actual mission of the apostles. You observe, Christ did not send them out to teach immediately after they became disciples, nor even immediately after they were selected for the apostleship. Mark†

* Matt. ix. 36.

† Mark iii. 14.

says that Jesus “ordained twelve, that they might be with him;” that is, that they might wait constantly on him, have habitual communion with him, be present at his public preaching, and enjoy his private instructions; and thus be fully qualified for the work on which he was to send them.

“Then,” says Luke, “*he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.*” The chief object of their mission was, “to preach the kingdom of God,” as it is here expressed—to preach, to proclaim publicly, as heralds, the introduction of the gospel dispensation—to declare, according to the light they then possessed, that Messiah was come, and that salvation was to be obtained, and sought, only through faith in his name. And on this errand they were formally sent and commissioned by him. In subserviency to this great design, and in order, chiefly, to gain credit to what they were to preach, he bestowed on them “power,” or energy, and official “authority,” or right, to cast out devils, to heal diseases, and to work other miracles. All rightful authority, and all power in reference to temporal, and especially to spiritual things, emanate from Christ, who has the government on his shoulder; and the particular way in which, as we are here told, Christ gave this power to the apostles, is justly considered as a proof of his Godhead. When we consider the case, for example, of Moses and the seventy elders,* we find that, though Moses chose them out from among the people, it was not he who conferred their gifts upon them: but “the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and gave it unto the seventy elders.” So also, though the apostles, as we read in the Acts,† communicated miraculous gifts to others, it was only instrumentally, and in the use of prayer to God, who was the true agent in bestowing the gifts. Here, however, without prayer, and without a reference to any agency but his own, Christ gave the apostles the miraculous power and authority. These he must, therefore, have had of himself; and, of course, he is God, equal with the Father.

From the parallel passage of Mark vi. 7, we learn that our Lord sent forth the twelve “by two and two.” This must appear a wise and gracious arrangement, whether we regard the object of their mission, or their own interest and comfort. It rendered their testimony legally valid; for, at the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word must be considered as established. It consulted their own wants and infirmities, as they would be ready to assist and encourage each other. In the words of Ecclesiastes,‡ “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.” In like manner, our Lord afterwards sent out the seventy by two and two.

In giving an account of the mission of the twelve, Matthew.

* Numb. xi. 16-25.

† Acts viii. 15.

‡ Ecclcs. iv. 9.

in his 10th chapter from the 5th verse, says that Jesus commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not"—(testifying against the schismatic conduct of the Samaritans, who were thus ranked with the Gentiles)—"but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The personal ministry of Christ, and the early labours of the apostles, were almost confined to the Jews. This was divinely ordered, for such reasons probably as these—that the Jews, who had the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, and who, of course, were, or ought to have been, the best judges, might be first appealed to for a decision in favour of Jesus' claim to the office of Messiah; that their prejudices against the Gentiles might not be too strongly opposed at once, but gradually done away; that a centre of operations might be established by the conversion of some of the Jews; and that their general and obstinate rejection of the gospel might prepare the way for its introduction among the Gentiles. After our Lord's resurrection, his instructions were these, that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem:" and Paul and Barnabas said to the contradicting and blaspheming Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." *

Matthew also informs us that, after mentioning the miracles they were to perform, our Lord said to the apostles, "Freely ye have received, freely give." It is quite plain, from the sequel, that this did not prohibit the apostles from taking from those among whom they ministered what was needful for their support: but it strictly forbade them to take any reward for the exercise of the gift of miracles, in the way, either of particular acts, or of conferring that gift on others. Had a person, possessed of such power, been at liberty to receive money for its exercise, he might soon have enriched himself wonderfully. But, in obedience to the divine will, those who had this gift were careful not to make gain of it; so that disinterestedness is one of the marks of true miracles. Thus, though much urged, Elisha would take nothing from Naaman, whom he had miraculously cured of the leprosy; and Gehazi, the prophet's servant, was smitten with the same disease, as a punishment for asking and receiving a present at that time. Thus, too, Peter said to Simon, the sorcerer, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Verse 3: "*And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.*" He directed them, in general, not to make

* Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 46.

any provision for their journey beforehand. Particularly, he ordered them not to take staves, that is, to be content with such a staff as they might have, and not seek another; for, in this parallel passage of Mark,* it is thus expressed that they were to take nothing "save a staff only." Nor were they to take a "scrip," or bag, for carrying articles in:—nor food, nor money, nor change of raiment. According to Matthew, they were not to have any kind of money in their "purses," or more literally, girdles, for it was usual for travellers to carry money in a fold of their girdles: "Neither shoes," that is, they were not to furnish themselves with strong shoes, but, as it is in Mark, were to be "shod with sandals." Neither were they to have changes of raiment. These directions implied that the particular mission on which they were now sent was to be short—that they ought to trust in providence—and that they would find those who would be disposed, as they were in duty bound, to assist them. Our Lord did, indeed, himself distinctly state the chief reason of these directions, when he added, according to Matthew, "For the labourer is worthy of his meat." The apostles found that they did not trust in Providence in vain; for, we thus read, in the 22d chapter of Luke, from the 35th verse, "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing." The following verse, however, proves that these directions, to make no provision, were temporary, and that Christ wisely altered his instructions according to the altered state of affairs: "Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."

We may here notice what our Lord said, as mentioned by Matthew: "And into whatsoever city, or town, ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide." None of the inhabitants could have a worthiness of merit in the sight of God, or be possessed of any such dispositions as were spiritually good, or inclining them to the reception of the gospel, previously to the operation of divine grace on their hearts: some of them, however, might be, not only of reputable character in public estimation, but truly pious, benevolent, and believing children of God, according to their light. Therefore, though the apostles were to seek the salvation of all, they were prudently to make such inquiries as would enable them to avoid repairing to persons of bad character, which would have created a prejudice against them; and they were to ascertain who were justly in good esteem, that if they, on meeting with them, should, as was probable, ask them to their homes, they might accept the invitation. This was, undoubtedly, the most likely way to secure a favourable reception from the public: and we see that even miraculous gifts and divine inspiration, did not render it useless to attend to the dictates of ordinary prudence and propriety.

* Mark vi. 8.

Our Lord added, according to Luke: "*And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart;*" or, according to Mark—"there abide, till ye depart from that place." He directed them, of course, if it was found convenient to continue, during their stay in the town, to lodge in the same house into which they had been at first received; and he guarded them against needlessly moving from house to house, which might offend their first friends, and render them suspected, and which would betray a restlessness, and be hurtful to the objects of their mission, as rendering it difficult for inquirers to know where to find them.

After supposing them to have continued for some time in a city, exerting themselves in preaching the kingdom of God, and working miracles, our Lord instructs them how to conduct themselves when they were about to leave it: and certainly, the procedure he enjoins was well calculated to awaken the consciences of those of the inhabitants who might disregard their message, and reject the gospel. "*And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet, for a testimony against them.*" The origin of this practice, and the weight of meaning it would convey, will be the better understood, when the following circumstances are considered. The Jews had a very great veneration for their own land—a veneration which, though it may have, in some, degenerated into a kind of superstition, was yet justified, in a considerable degree, by the signal honours and privileges conferred on it by Jehovah. They called it, and it continues to be called, the Holy Land. This veneration extended to the very earth, the very soil, the very dust of the land. Naaman, the Syrian, appears to have entered into this idea, when, in leaving the land of Judea to return to his own country, he proposed to take, and probably did take with him, "two mules' burden of earth," whereon, or wherewith, to erect an altar, conceiving that soil to be more holy than any other. As the converse of this idea, the Jews looked on all other lands, that is, all heathen lands, like the heathen themselves, as unholy and unclean. Therefore, it is said to have been a practice with them, when they had been abroad, and had arrived at the border of their own country, to shake off the dust of their feet, that they might not bring any of it to pollute, as it were, the land of Judea, and that they might also testify their entire disapprobation and renunciation of every thing heathenish and idolatrous. In like manner, it is said that they were unwilling to allow herbs, or trees, to be transplanted from a heathen land into their own, lest any of the earth should be brought along with them. To Jews, then, who were acquainted with these things, this act must have been very expressive. It signified, to the unbelieving part of the inhabitants of the city, that the apostles solemnly protested against them—that they were clear of their blood—that they did not acknowledge them as God's people, but counted them as bad

as heathens ; and that the Lord would shake them off as vile. Very probably, the twelve complied literally with this direction. We read of Paul and Barnabas doing so afterwards, in Acts xiii. 51 : when a persecution was raised against them by certain of the inhabitants of Antioch, "they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium." Very similar to this form of protestation by shaking off the dust of the feet, was that by shaking the raiment. Thus, Nehemiah writes (v. 13 ; "Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise : even thus be he shaken out and emptied." In like manner, as we read, Acts xviii. 6, when the Jews at Corinth "opposed themselves and blasphemed," Paul "shook his raiment and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean ; from thenceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

By Matthew's account, our Lord said much more to the apostles at this time : in particular, he forewarned them of the various kinds of opposition they would have to encounter ; and he exhorted them to be courageous and faithful, from a consideration of a particular providence, and of the heavenly glory that awaited them. These things you will find written in the 10th chapter of that evangelist, from the 16th verse to the end of the chapter. Having received their instructions, and these serious counsels, the apostles "*departed*," as Luke informs us, "*and went through the towns, preaching the gospel*," or the good news of salvation through Jesus the Messiah, and working miracles of "*healing every where*."

Before mentioning the return of the apostles from their mission, Luke tells us something of the feelings of Herod with regard to Jesus, whose fame had now become great. "*Now Herod*," that is, Herod Antipas, "*the tetrarch*"—the governor, who was called a tetrarch, because he succeeded to a fourth part of his father Herod the Great's dominions, and who also bore, at least in Galilee, the title of king—this Herod "*heard of all that was done by Jesus ; and he was perplexed ;*" he was as a traveller bewildered, and not knowing what road to take, or what to think, "*because it was said of some that John was risen from the dead ; and of some, that Elias had appeared ; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John have I beheaded : but who is this of whom I hear such things ?*" As we formerly considered the history and martyrdom of John the Baptist, when lecturing on the 3d chapter, we shall not now go into any repetition, but merely remark, that we have here an illustration of the powerful workings of a guilty conscience. Both Matthew and Mark* expressly tell us that when Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he said, "This is John the Baptist." It is truly awful to have a guilty and accusing conscience ! This was enough to perplex and torment Herod in the midst of all his wealth, luxury, and power. Let us seek to obtain

* Matt. xiv. 1 ; Mark vi. 14.

and to preserve a conscience void of offence, that its testimony, instead of being our torment, may be our rejoicing. Luke adds, that Herod "*desired to see*" Christ. There was curiosity in this desire—curiosity to ascertain if he were really only John risen from the dead, and curiosity to see a miracle done by him. There was also malice in this desire; for, we read in chapter xiii. verse 31st, that some of the Pharisees said to Christ, "Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee"—or, more exactly, wishes to kill thee. This desire to see Christ was gratified afterwards, as we find in the 23d chapter, from the 7th verse, when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. Then, however, "Herod and his men of war set him at nought." How useless the compunctions of mere natural conscience, when not introductory to pardoning mercy and regenerating grace! Let every sinner see to it that his convictions be followed out to conversion; and every believer, that his consciousness of any thing wrong be the forerunner of actual amendment.

But let us observe, in conclusion, some instructions, or general application, which may be drawn from the account of the mission of the apostles: and we have here much instruction in reference both to ministers and people.

First, *In reference to ministers, we have here several rules, in regard to their qualifications and appointment.* From the apostles standing in the relation of disciples before their designation to the apostleship, we infer that men ought themselves to be converted to God, before they engage in the work of converting others—that they ought to be Christians, before they become Christian teachers. It is true that the Lord may effect good by the instrumentality of careless men: but it is surely those who are in earnest and enlightened, who are generally most useful; and woe to those who preach to others, and are yet castaways themselves! To every such person the words of the Most High seem to apply with peculiar force: "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" This truth ought to be plainly stated; and yet, how unbecoming would it be to do so in an uncharitable and self-confident spirit, and in a sarcastic tone! When we advert to it, may it be with godly jealousy over ourselves, with meekness, humility, and love.

Again, from the apostles being kept along with Christ to be more fully instructed before they were sent out, we infer that none should be employed as teachers till they be well qualified by previous instruction. They ought to be taught of God by the Holy Spirit; and, as miraculous gifts have ceased, they can only expect that teaching in the way of diligent and prayerful study. They ought, plainly, to have such an education, such a degree of human learning, as is requisite to their understanding the letter of the divine record, and to their coming forward with respectability and advantage, according to the progress of

the times and the various classes of people to whom they have to minister. Sufficient time should be given for acquiring, and for proving that they have acquired, the necessary character and knowledge. Every man ought to be a Christian; but every Christian is not fit to be a teacher. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," writes Paul to Timothy: and he also says that "a bishop," or Christian minister, who is the overseer of a flock, must be "apt to teach," and "not a novice."

But further still, as the apostles were formally appointed and ordained to their office, and sent forth to preach, by Christ, we infer that so must all ministers, in so far, at least, as is applicable to a time when Christ's presence, and miraculous calls, appointments, and gifts have ceased. Preachers ought to have that inward call of the Spirit, which is known by a fitness and a decided desire for the work of the ministry, and a longing to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of men. But in addition to this, and in place of the direct and immediate nomination to the office by Christ himself, there ought, now that he has ascended on high, to come appointment and ordination by those to whom he has intrusted this power, namely, those who are already in the ministry. Paul says to Timothy,* "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also:" and to Titus,† "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders," or bishops, or ministers, as the context shows, "in every city." You will see how this plainly scriptural idea bears against the propriety of any persons undertaking the work of preaching who are not expressly appointed to it by Christ's ministers. We hold that there is a scriptural distinction between the office of a minister and the situation of the people, however learned and pious, which cannot, without much danger, be disregarded. When, then, a layman becomes pious, and feels a desire to preach, ought he, as a layman, to follow out that desire, or ought he to be encouraged to do so by others? By no means. God is the God of order, and not of confusion, in the Churches; and no man is entitled to break through that order under pretence of a higher call, when inspiration has ceased. If, indeed, such a person change to the ministerial calling entirely, that may be very commendable; though he should think well before he take such a step, for Paul lays down the general rule for converts, when he says,‡ "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." It is not enough to plead, in defence of such irregularities, the good that has been done, or may be done, by such persons: for the good done, is done, not because of these irregularities, but in spite of them, while no little evil, on the whole, results from them. We are not to plead for any error because there may be piety and zeal in those who hold it, or

* 2 Tim. ii. 2.

† Tit. i. 5.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 20.

because God may render them of some use to his cause. Suppose, in this country—for we shall not say what necessity might justify, were men cut off from all Christian churches—suppose a layman of piety, talents, and great property and influence, from an impulse of unfeigned zeal, appears in the pulpit, and even does some good by his preaching, do we allow that he acts well, or for the benefit of the Church, on the whole, by that step? By no means. He, in the first place, transgresses a divine appointment; and, secondly, as to usefulness, he would have been much more useful, in all probability, if he had not stepped out of his own proper sphere. He intrudes into a field in which there are already many diligent and skilful labourers, and he, in a great measure, cuts himself off from the likelihood of benefiting those in his own station of life, and indeed all sober thinking people, who become suspicious of him, and who are often prejudiced against what is scriptural and rational in his views and conduct by what they readily perceive to be unscriptural and extravagant. We speak here the language of truth and soberness, and not of bigotry, or envy. There is very little in Scripture which can be twisted into the support of such a system. As to the case* of Eldad and Medad, who prophesied in the camp, which led Moses, instead of envying, or forbidding them to prophesy, to say, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!” these two men were previously fixed on by Moses as part of the seventy elders—not to insist on the consideration that the Spirit of God rested on them miraculously, which must always have been sufficient; and therefore, this case is in favour of the position we are establishing. And in the case of the man mentioned in a subsequent part of this chapter, whom the disciples wished our Lord to forbid to cast out devils, because he walked not with them—there, too, there was the gift of miracles, which was a sufficient authority, but which is not bestowed on any in our day. In fact, as soon as we can trace anything like a regularly constituted Church in the Old Testament, we find the difference distinctly marked between the people and those who were to minister before the Lord in public things. No example of this is more decisive than that of king Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 18), whom, when he went into the temple to burn incense, Azariah and the priests withstood faithfully, saying, “It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed: neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.” And though sometimes the term priests, under the New Testament, is applied in common to all Christians, every thing ceremonial being now done away, yet we have seen that the distinction between ministers and people, teachers and taught, is clearly

* Numb. xi. 26.

kept up throughout the New Testament: so that, with regard to the Christian ministry, it should still be the rule that "no man taketh this honour to himself, but he who is ordained of God, as was Aaron," and we may add, who is outwardly ordained by those who are already in the office.

But there are also here many lessons to ministers, as to the right discharge of their office, after they are duly appointed to it. For example, they are here taught that the great end of their ministry is "to preach the kingdom of God"—to preach the gospel, in all the light and fulness of the dispensation of the Spirit, calling their hearers to the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not, indeed, the miraculous gifts of healing and exorcising; but they are to direct the spiritually sick to Jesus, the physician of souls, and to labour to deliver men from the spiritual bondage of sin and Satan. They are entitled, it is true, to be properly provided for: but they are here taught carefully to avoid a mercenary spirit and to trust in the Lord, that his providence and his people will take care of them, when they are employed in his service. While their commission extends to all, even to the chief of sinners, they may here learn to expect their first success with those who are already so far impressed as to be, at least, favourably disposed towards them—and also to desire to be fortified by the countenance of those who are of good report in the place where they are labouring. If they faithfully declare the truth, they may expect some success. In cases, however, which alas! always occur, of persons who will not give heed, they are here taught faithfully and plainly to warn them of their danger, and to testify against them, not only in words, but by such actions as may be natural and proper, according to the ideas and customs of the country. Though it is now very rarely to be even imitated, I have heard of the significant action here enjoined by our Lord, being once literally adopted with some good effect. The minister of a country parish, being much grieved by the ungodliness and obstinacy of one of his parishioners, who was a householder, and having repeatedly spoken to him in vain, resolved to call on him, at his house, once more, and to speak to him for the last time. He did so; and without making any impression on him. But, as he was rising to leave the house, he said to him, "Well, I can say no more; therefore, I will now shake off the dust of my feet, as a testimony against you." Accordingly, when he came to the threshold of the outer door, he twice or thrice struck first one of his feet against the door-post, and then the other; and, without saying another word, departed. The emblematic action effected what words could not effect; for it struck the man deeply, on reflection. His conscience was awakened, at least for a time; but I did not learn if the impression was permanent.

We observe, *secondly*, that as this account of the mission of the apostles is instructive to ministers, so it is also *instructive to*

the people. It reminds them, for example, of the duty of providing for their ministers. While ministers are not to be mercenary, the people, or those who administer for the people, are not to be unkind. They who waited at the altar, were partakers with the altar. "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." Especially, this passage leads to consider what is due to those who are sent out as missionaries to preach the gospel in heathen lands. As it is not reasonable to expect that they will be treated by heathens as the apostles were treated by the best part of the Jewish population; so, it would be a perversion of the directions here given, to inform them that missionaries should now be sent off without any provision, and abandoned to the mercy of the heathen. That would be not a trusting, but a tempting of Providence. If, indeed, our modern missionaries had the power of working miracles, that alone might secure their support; but, as it is, all prudent and kind care must be taken of them at first; and this care must be continued, until a sufficient interest be excited on the spot where they are, to render supply from a distance unnecessary.

Again, all Christians are here reminded of the duty of hospitality, as in general, so particularly to those who come from a distance on any errand connected with the cause of religion. This we infer from its being supposed that the most worthy inhabitants of the cities and towns would invite the apostles to lodge with them. Of this virtue, Scripture furnishes some beautiful examples, such as that of Abraham and Lot to the angels; that of the widow of Zarephath to Elijah; that of the Shunammite to Elisha, for whom she made a little chamber; that of Job, who said, "The stranger did not lodge in the street, but I opened my doors to the traveller;" that of Lydia to Paul and Luke, and perhaps other disciples, of whom Luke thus writes, "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful unto the Lord, come into my house, and abide there, and she constrained us; and that of the brethren to Paul and his companions at Puteoli. "Be not forgetful, then, to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."*

It is only a slight extension of the principle of the rule, "Inquire who is worthy," to say, that when Christians come to live in any city, they should be careful of the acquaintances they make: they should not thoughtlessly commit themselves to whomsoever may come in their way, but study, if they are lodgers, to lodge with those who are of good report, and if they are householders, or live with their own family, to become acquainted with those who know and obey the truth.

Finally, *ought you not all to be thankful that the kingdom of God is now preached to you, and careful to give it a believing and cordial reception?* To you is the word of this salvation sent. We testify to you the gospel of the grace of God. We declare unto

* See also 3 John 5-8.

you glad tidings, how that the promise made unto the fathers is fulfilled. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man" (Jesus Christ) "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Beware of rejecting this salvation. See that you give us no occasion to shake our raiment, to shake off the dust of our feet against you: but so receive from us the word of life, that you and we may have occasion to rejoice, in the day of Christ, that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

LECTURE XLV.

LUKE IX. 10-17.

“ And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place, belonging to the city, called Bethsaida. 11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place. 13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14. (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes; and, looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.”

WE read in the beginning of this chapter how the apostles, having received their instructions from Christ, set out on their first mission, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and working miracles of healing. Nor did our Lord intermit his labours during their absence: for Matthew tells us, at the beginning of his 11th chapter, that “when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in the cities.” We are not informed how long the twelve were out on this occasion; it is obvious, however, that it was but a short time. In the first verse of the passage under consideration, we find that, “*the apostles, when they were returned*” from their mission, “*told Jesus all that they had done.*” According to Mark,* “the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.” They gave him an account of the doctrine they had preached, and the miracles they had performed; and also, in all probability, of the places they had visited, and the reception they had met with.

On this it is proper to remark, that, like the Apostles, all ministers—all who preach the gospel—must return, at the close of their embassy, to give an account, to the Head of the Church, of their preaching, conduct, and success. This is a consideration well calculated to excite them to diligence and faithfulness, and their hearers to the careful improvement of their ministry. The apostle thus exhorts the Hebrews: “Obey them that have the rule over you. and submit yourselves: for they watch for

* Mark vi. 30.

your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

Luke proceeds to say, that Jesus "*took them*" (the apostles), "*and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city, called Bethsaida.*" The word Bethsaida signifies the city, or rather house, of hunting or fishing. It was well situated for hunting, as it belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, whose district is said to have abounded with deer, to which, as well as to the character of the tribe, some think there is a reference in Moses' blessing: "Naphtali is a hind let loose." And it was peculiarly well suited for fishing, as it lay on the borders of the Lake of Gennesareth, where the river Jordan runs into the lake. Peter and Andrew, who were fishermen, were of this city. There is no mention of this city in the Old Testament, though it is often mentioned in the New: the reason of which, no doubt, is, that it was, according to Josephus, a very obscure place, till Herod-Philip, the tetrarch, built it up into a handsome city, and gave it the new name of Julias, in compliment to Julia, the daughter of Augustus Cæsar. To a desert, or solitary place, belonging to this city, our Lord now repaired with the twelve. We learn, from Mark, why our Lord wished them to retire for a little: it was that they might "rest a while, for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." He wisely and kindly wished them to rest after the fatigues of their mission, and to withdraw from the people, who constantly resorted to them, that they might have leisure for reflection, private instruction, and prayer. And, though they met with some interruption, as we shall soon see, he, no doubt, took care that they should not altogether be deprived of such opportunities of edification. Observe here, that the most zealous servants of Christ cannot be always on the stretch: they must have their seasons of rest, and these, it is their Master's wish, should be allowed them. Do not, also, all of us need occasionally, nay, frequently, to retire, not only from the business of common life, but even from the public and active duties of religion? Those who preach the word need retirement for their personal benefit, and for acquiring ideas, and strength of body and mind, for renewed teaching: and those who hear the word need retirement, that they may ascertain whether what they have heard with the multitude be received by them as individuals, and that they may follow up the word by meditation and prayer.

The other evangelists mention that Jesus, with his disciples, went thither "by ship." Being somewhere on the coast when the apostles joined him, he embarked on the sea, as being the least fatiguing way of going to the retired spot to which he intended to conduct them. Luke says, in the 11th verse, that "*the people, when they knew it, followed him.*" Or, as it is in Mark, "The people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran a-foot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him." Some of those who were near the spot where

he took ship, knowing him, and rightly conjecturing, by the course he steered, where he intended to land, set out on foot, with all speed, increased their numbers from the towns through which they passed, and were so expeditious that they stood ready to meet him, in a great crowd, by the time he reached the shore.* Now, as on many other occasions, were the prophetic words fulfilled: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." On this, we may remark, that when ordinances are removed to a distance from us, we should follow them, and be willing to sacrifice worldly considerations, and to undergo fatigue, in order to reach them. When ordinances are brought to our door, how thankful ought we to be, how careful ought we to be to improve them, and how blame-worthy are we if we neglect them! But, should they be of difficult access, we are not therefore to rest contented without them, nor are we to remain carelessly behind them when they are withdrawn. The command to the Israelites† may be considered as a lesson to us: "When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it."

Though it was, doubtless, somewhat inconvenient for our Lord and his disciples to be thus met by the multitude, yet, as there is no reason to suppose that they were intending any rudeness—as many of them were influenced by commendable motives—and as a noble opportunity of doing good was again thus presented—our Lord, instead of dismissing them with a reproof, received them kindly, and again began to teach, and to work miracles. According to Luke, "*He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.*" According to Mark, Jesus, "when he came out" of the ship, "saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." From John's account, 6th chapter, at the 3d verse, it appears that Jesus, in order, we may suppose, that he might be well seen and heard, "went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples," and the multitude also waited on him. It appears, too, from John's stating that the Passover was nigh, that it was in the season of spring, which admitted of their being in such a situation. Thus our Lord spent the day.

Verses 12-14: "*And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we shall go and buy meat for all this people. (For they were about five thousand men.)*" There were two similar miracles performed by our Lord, namely, this miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes,

* Doddridge.

† Josh. iii. 3.

which is related by all the four evangelists; and the miracle of the feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few little fishes, related by Matthew* and Mark.† Contrary to his usual custom, John repeats this miracle of the five thousand, probably to prepare the way for the introduction of the long and interesting discourse which is founded on it, and in which our Lord declares himself “the bread of life.” Consistently with Luke, but introducing some further particulars, John‡ thus writes: Jesus “saith unto Philip, Whence shall we have bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.” From this, it is thought likely that two hundred pence, or denarii, about six pounds five shillings of our money, was all the stock the disciples had at this time. And Philip said that though the whole of it were expended, it would scarcely purchase as much bread as would furnish such a multitude with a slight refreshment, not to speak of a full meal. It did not occur to the disciples how Jesus was to furnish the meal; but he knew well what he was to do. Instances of the miraculous multiplication of provisions had happened before. According to the word of the Lord by Elijah, the widow of Zarephath’s barrel of meal, wasted not, neither did her cruise of oil fail. By Elisha’s direction, a certain widow poured out of one pot of oil, till all the vessels she could borrow were filled. But the case most similar to this in the Old Testament, is related in 2 Kings, 4th chapter, from the 42d verse: “And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God” (Elisha) “bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof: and he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What! should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.” Much more striking, however, is this miracle, by which our Lord, with five loaves and two fishes, fed five thousand men, and that, too, as Matthew§ states, “besides women and children.”

It is difficult to conceive any scene of greater simplicity and grandeur, than this must have now presented: “*And Jesus said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down.*” Or as in Mark,|| “And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.” Some conceive this description implies that the people were arranged in separate parties, some of which contained fifty each, and some an hundred each; and that, no doubt, would secure some regularity. Others are of opinion that they were arranged

* Matt. xv. 32.

‡ Matt. xiv. 21.

† Mark viii. 1.

|| Mark vi. 39.

‡ John vi. 5.

in what are strictly called ranks, or rows, with room to pass between each row, forming thus, at once, one great party with distinct subdivisions; and it is remarked that, if we suppose them thus drawn up, an hundred men in front, and fifty deep, this would exactly exhaust the whole five thousand, and place them so that their number would be very easily perceived, while it proved that our Lord knew the number before. The women and children must be supposed to have been seated by themselves, according to the usual custom in Eastern countries.

Then followed a feast, which, however inferior in worldly attractions, far surpassed, in real grandeur, even the royal feast of Ahasuerus. "*Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven,*" a natural and reverential token of his regard being directed to his Father in heaven, to whom he was about to address himself in words, "*he blessed them*"—he prayed for, and actually bestowed such a blessing on the provisions as could come on inanimate objects, and as the present time required—namely, a blessing to the use of the people, and to the increase of the quantity of food. John says that our Lord "gave thanks"—thanks, we may suppose, as for all the goodness of God; so especially, for the great display of his power and kindness now to be given. He then "*brake,*" divided the loaves, and also the fishes, into portions; and we must suppose that, as he did so, they miraculously increased in his hands, and probably, that they increased also in the after distribution. He "gave" the provisions, first, "*to the disciples,*" to put honour on them, and to show how the affairs of his kingdom in general were to be managed. Then the "*disciples set before the multitude.*" They went round, distributing the provisions in great abundance; John says, "*as much as they would,*" that is, as much as the people would take. Wonderful to tell, "*they did eat, and were all filled*"—fully satisfied! Finally, as we learn from the harmonized account, when they were filled, Jesus said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost: and the twelve, going through the whole ranks, and carefully collecting the broken pieces of bread and fish, "*there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets*"—a much greater quantity than they had at first. How astonishing!

But let us improve this miracle, literally and figuratively.

Let us improve it *literally*, or in reference to the supply of bodily wants. And first, we learn from this miracle, that *it is our duty to do what we can to supply the bodily wants of others*. Our Lord showed compassion on the multitude, not only by teaching, but by feeding them. The disciples appear to have been willing to spend all the money they had, to buy bread for them; and though this was not required of them, they cheerfully brought forward their whole stock of provisions, and distributed them, under their Master's direction. Now, there is in this a pattern for our imitation. None of us can work miracles, it is true, but most of us can contribute something, and all of us

should contribute liberally, according to our means, to supply the bodily wants of others, of which the want of food is perhaps the most urgent. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen," saith the Lord, "to deal thy bread to the hungry?" We are charged "to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." As the loaves and fishes multiplied in this miracle, so we may say that a little will go far in charity when judiciously applied, and that a particular blessing often attends those who are particularly generous, so that their property is increased, instead of diminished, by their charity, when viewed in all its consequences. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." So also, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* "As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness." Encouragements to this duty abound in Scripture. In the words of the wise man, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight."—"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed: for he giveth of his bread to the poor."—"If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry," saith Isaiah, "and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Nay, if such charity flow from Christian principle, it will be acknowledged, at last, as done to Christ himself, when he shall say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."

2. We here learn that *Those who follow Christ may trust to him for the necessities of life.* It is, indeed, only this principle which pervades this history, and not what is miraculous in it, which is generally applicable. Miracles have ceased; but the providential government of the world, which is on Christ's shoulder, may be fully depended on by those who, using prudence and diligence in their worldly concerns, are still more earnest in seeking the salvation of their souls. All supplies come originally from him, through whatever channel they may be conveyed; and he has a peculiar care over those who seek him. If the very ravens are fed, much more shall his own people be fed. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." It is only what is necessary, however, which is promised. This miraculous provision was only bread, barley bread, as we learn from John; and fish, which was ordinary and common fare to those who lived by the

* 2 Cor. ix. 9.

Lake of Gennesareth. There was no wine, and they must have been contented with water from the brook or spring. As our Lord did not then exert his miraculous power, so neither does he now engage his common providential power, to furnish dainties. Yet, these are blessed promises made to his people, that "bread shall be given to them, and their water shall be sure;" and that, if they "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," all needful things shall be added unto them. Let none of them murmur, though reduced to plain or coarse fare; but, having food and raiment, let them therewith be content. Those who have not even bread, should consider whether they be not destitute of faith. If it be so that any of Christ's real disciples are in want, he will soon supply their want, or abundantly make it up in divine consolation.

3. We are here reminded of the duty of what is commonly called *saying grace at meals*. Before Christ distributed the loaves and the fishes, "he blessed them," and "gave thanks;" and he did the same when he fed the four thousand, when he instituted the Lord's supper, and when he sat at meat with the disciples in Emmaus. In addition to Christ's example, Scripture contains many passages which, in the form of example, or of precept, enjoin attention to this duty. Of these the following may be noticed. Deut. viii. 10: "When thou hast eaten, and art full, then shalt thou bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee." 1 Sam. ix. 13, when Saul was seeking Samuel, the maidens said to him and his servant, "As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him before he go up to the high place to eat; for, the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that he bidden." Acts xxvii. 34, Paul said to his shipmates, "Wherefore, I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health:" and "when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." 1 Tim. iv. 4, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for, it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Rom. xiv. 6, "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks." And 1 Cor. x. 30, "If I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Without meaning to say that any precise form, or length, or numeration of particulars, is necessary, the following hints may be given as of general application. A grace is a prayer before, or after meat, which circumstances require to be short, but which ought always to be solemn and earnest, never formal and careless. It most expressly requires an acknowledgment of God as the author of our mercies, and a petition for his blessing along with them: and, as presented by Christians, it ought, in some way, to refer

to the gospel, and spiritual things, and be concluded in the name of Christ. At a solitary meal, the duty must by no means be neglected; and then one's own private feelings may be more particularly consulted as to the matter. At a social meal, time and circumstances, in what is indifferent, may be, and ought to be, considered; but all present ought to hear what is said, and join heartily in it, else it is no grace, no act of blessing and thanksgiving of theirs. Children ought to be early instructed in the nature of this duty, and taught and accustomed reverentially to discharge it. Nor ought it ever afterwards to be discontinued. The due observance of this pious custom adorns the best furnished table, and ennobles and sweetens the plainest fare. Let no man, who should be expected to discharge this honourable service before others, whether he be minister, or landlord, or other person presiding, or taking a lead for the time, be afraid or ashamed so to do.

4. From the particular direction our Lord here gave as to the fragments, we draw the general rule that *nothing should be lost, or wasted*. To waste our substance, is a sinful abuse of God's gifts. The prodigal son "wasted his substance with riotous living;" and, according to another parable, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods." We must "use this world as not abusing it." It is one thing to be generous, and hospitable; it is quite another to be thoughtless, extravagant, and wasteful. Such wasting is not only offensive to God, but unjust and unkind to our fellow-creatures. With regard, for example, to what is most analogous to the caution in this passage, namely, the neglect and loss of provisions after an entertainment, those who fare sumptuously, or plentifully, should remember that there is many a Lazarus at their door, or in their neighbourhood, who would be glad to be fed with the crumbs that fall—the left food that is taken away from their table. It is a good charity "to send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared." But, whether this exact mode of charity be much resorted to, or not, as it is clear that charity, in some form, should by no means be neglected, so, it is also clear that the being careful not to waste, but, on the contrary, frugally and judiciously to manage affairs in the house, and, indeed, in every department, is the way to place people in those easy circumstances, according to their station, be it what it may, which put it in their power, not merely to give somewhat, but to persevere, without imprudence, in contributing very liberally, to those who are in need. The connection between economy and charity, is well illustrated in Solomon's description of the virtuous woman, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness:"—"she stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." The waster acts a foolish part for himself, too, in every respect:—"There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of

the wise," says Solomon, "but a foolish man spendeth it up." Nor should men carelessly sit down without trying to find any piece of property which has been lost; the woman, in the parable, is supposed to search diligently for the lost piece of silver, till she find it. The same principle ought to be applied, also, to the proper improvement of our time. Time is a precious talent committed to us, which ought to be carefully husbanded, and the fragments, or small portions, of which should be turned to some good account. Though each of these fragments be small in itself, they are very considerable when all put together, and much may be done during them. Let us beware of wasting and losing time by sloth, or inconsideration. "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Let us see, then, that we "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Once more here, we should improve this miracle in the literal sense, to *confirm us in our belief of the divine mission and Messiahship of Jesus Christ*. This is, indeed, exactly the conclusion which John * tells us was drawn from this miracle by those who were eye-witnesses of it. "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of truth that prophet that should come into the world." And, surely, every man who rightly exercises his reason, must still draw the same conclusion from the same premises. Let us remember, however, that, as the greater part of the spectators of this miracle, though the conviction of Christ's being the great Prophet was thereby forced on their minds, did not receive his doctrine, nor continue to follow him, but "went back, and walked no more with him;" so we ought to beware, lest a somewhat similar inconsistency on our part render our profession vain, and our Christianity only a name. If we acknowledge his divine mission and Messiahship, the same evidence should lead us to receive all the doctrines he teaches, to rely on him for acceptance, and to do whatsoever he commands.

Let us, therefore, also improve this miracle *figuratively*, or, in reference to *the supply of our spiritual wants*. In this our Lord himself leads the way: for, though Luke does not record this, John supplies the account of it. In the same chapter in which this miracle is recorded by John, he tells us how our Lord had soon occasion to complain of many who sought him, not because of the miracles and the truths they established, but "because they did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Our Lord then thus exhorted: "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you;" and he added, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—"My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." But the very same spiritual nourishment he now invites you to partake of;

* John vi. 14.

—that is, in plain terms, he invites you to partake of all the blessings of salvation through faith in his atonement. And do you not stand in need of this nourishment?—is it not written that man “liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God?” Ought you not to say, with Job, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food?” Are not the blessings which Jesus is now ready to bestow of much more importance than if he were here personally present to work a miracle to feed your bodies? The provisions he now brings forward may appear, to the world, to be mean and scanty: but they are just those which, as poor sinners, you require; and they are truly heavenly and abundant. Knowledge, pardon, peace, comfort, strength, holiness, and every other spiritual blessing, may be had from him. “My God,” saith the apostle, “shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” However great the number to be supplied, the provision is sufficient: nay, the more widely it is diffused, the more it increases; the greater the number who are blessed with it, the greater the blessedness of each. Here there is “bread enough and to spare.” Like the twelve disciples of old, ministers are employed to distribute this bread of life: and it is well when they can indeed say, “We have received of the Lord that which we deliver unto you.”—“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.” This we desire now to do, exhorting you all to come, and to be fully satisfied with the blessings of salvation, and saying, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”—“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

LECTURE XLVI.

LUKE IX. 18-27.

“And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19. They answering, said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering, said, The Christ of God. 21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. 23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25. For, what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.”

THE passages parallel to this are in Matt. xvi. 13, and Mark viii. 27. From these two Evangelists, it appears that, though Luke introduces the information which we have now read immediately after the account of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, some time had intervened, during which our Lord had visited various places, and wrought several miracles. But, without stopping to mention these particularly, let us observe, at once, that the circumstances stated in the passage under consideration occurred in the coasts, or district of country connected with Cæsarea Philippi. This city is supposed to have been the same formerly called Laish, or Dan,* rebuilt and much improved by Philip the tetrarch, and called by him Cæsarea, in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, and also Philippi, after his own name, which served to distinguish this from the other Cæsarea, a much greater city, which was on the sea-coast of Phœnicia, and which is repeatedly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

In Mark viii. 27, we thus read, “And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the town of Cæsarea Philippi; and by the way, he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?”—according to the first verse of the passage in Luke, “*And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them saying, Whom say the people that I am?*” From these two accounts we learn that, “by the way,” or during the course of this journey, as our Lord was “alone,” that is, apart from the multitude, and with his dis-

* Josh. xix. 47; Judg. xviii. 7.

ciples only, he prayed with his disciples, and put to them a certain question. May not this be considered as an example to travellers to attend to the duties of prayer and edifying conversation? This, too, furnishes, as nearly as circumstances permitted, an example, on the part of our Lord, of attention to domestic religion; for the apostles, being so much with him, might be considered as his family. And, as he was the Teacher and they were the disciples, we may, from this part of his conduct, infer the general rule that it is the duty of teachers, or masters, to pray with, and for, their disciples, or scholars, and diligently to catechise, and instruct them in the knowledge of Christ.

The question which our Lord put to the disciples was, "Whom say the people that I (or, according to Matthew, that I the Son of man) am?" Though the Son of God, our Lord was also truly the Son of man, having taken on him the human nature entire, both soul and body, yet without sin. This was one of the titles by which the Saviour was to be known, according to Daniel's prophecy.* Probably our Lord adopted this title on this occasion as being the humblest, and the best suited to the lowly circumstances in which he was tabernacled among men. He wished his disciples to say what was the opinion entertained of him by the people, after all the opportunities of judging of him from his teaching and miracles with which they had been furnished. Our Lord did not, on his own account, need that the disciples should testify any thing to him on this or on any other subject, for he knew, of himself, all things: some of the uses, however, of his putting this question are apparent. It served to show his concern for the success of his preaching—to lead the disciples to think and speak on a most important topic—to guard them against the errors relating to it into which others had fallen—and to prepare the way for his asking them what opinion they entertained of him themselves, and for Peter's interesting confession. In reply to this question, the disciples said that some (among whom, we were expressly told, was Herod) said that Jesus was "*John the Baptist*" risen from the dead;—that "*some*," mistaking the prediction that Elijah was to come to prepare the way for Messiah, and not being aware how that was fulfilled in John, said that Jesus was "*Elias*," or Elijah;—that others (for so we are told in Matthew), probably from the eminence of that prophet, said that Jesus was Jeremiah; and finally, that others, without naming any individual, said that "*one of the old prophets was risen again*." We may here observe that, as there were of old very different opinions among the people concerning Christ, so there are still many different opinions with regard to various religious questions, which one might think ought to be plain enough, and on which there ought to be but one opinion. Besides, as all the different opinions here stated were demonstra-

* Dan. vii. 13.

tive of some degree, though certainly a very inadequate degree, of respect to Christ (for the disciples do not here mention those who said that he was a deceiver of the people), so there were still differences of opinion among those who are inquiring after the way of salvation, and who have some respect for religion. Now, the fact of such differences should not, as it unhappily sometimes does, stumble any man, so as to disgust or discourage him, as if there were no truth at all in religion, or as if certainty on the subject were unattainable: for what subject is there, in any degree involving human feeling, and depending on moral evidence, on which differences do not prevail? Error is various; but truth is one. Every wise man should seek deliverance from the former, and seek to know, embrace, and hold fast the latter. Nor are we hastily to adopt the opinions of others because there may be in them some apparent or real respect to Christ: for every thing must be tried by the unerring standard of revelation. We are reminded, too, that among many who call themselves the followers of Christ, there are different shades of opinion with regard to him which, though professing to honour him, and being indeed complimentary to him, as far as they go, are yet quite inadequate; so that when those who hold them are called on to be more explicit, they deny the truth, and refuse him the honour which is his due. As to this particular subject of difference, the personal and official dignity of Jesus Christ, it is no matter of doubtful disputation, or of inferior importance, for it is clearly settled by the highest authority, and quite essential in the Christian scheme. Whatever errors, therefore, might be entertained by the multitude, the disciples were now correctly instructed on this point.

Addressing himself to his disciples, our Lord said, "*But whom say ye that I am?*" To this question, "*Peter,*" who was of a frank and bold temper, and who frequently spoke for them all, replied,—"*The Christ of God.*" We have frequently occasion to mention that the word Messiah, or Christ, signifies the "Anointed One," and is an official name of the Redeemer, who is so called because he was set apart and qualified for his office, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, which were given to him without measure. The disciples, then, confessed Jesus to be not only prophet, but that great Prophet, Priest, and King, who was to enlighten, save, and rule God's people. According to Matthew, Peter's answer at full length was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This title, the Son of God, was declaratory, not only of his Messiahship, but of his divine nature. He is the Son of God, in a sense peculiar to himself:—he is the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God, of the same nature with the Father, and eternally proceeding from him; and all "men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

Now, my friends, Jesus may be considered as putting the

same question to us, which he put to the twelve, "Whom say ye that I am?" Can we, then, in light and in faith, say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" If we can, if we do really believe that he is such a Christ, and has done such things, as the Word of God represents him to be, and to have done—if we believe in him, according to his real character and work—then are we the children of God; for, the apostle John* declares that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;" and then are we delivered from the reign and wilful commission of sin, for, the same apostle also declares that "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."—"If ye believe not that I am he," saith Jesus, "ye shall die in your sins"—"but whoso believeth in me shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Let us, then, earnestly pray that with "our heart we may believe unto righteousness, and with our mouth make confession unto salvation:" and never let us forget that no man can thus "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

In this connection, we may just notice, that, according to Matthew,† our Lord now said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," or son of Jonas, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it," hath not discovered to thee this great truth of my Messiahship, in this saving way, "but my Father who is in heaven." Then our Lord added: "And I say also unto thee, Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Without enlarging on this inviting field, which would lead us too far away from the passage before us, the following hints may be given. As Peter had spoken, not only for himself, but for the apostles in general, so our Lord, though addressing himself more immediately to Peter, spoke what, in the main, was applicable to all the apostles also. The only foundation of merit is Christ himself; other foundation, in this sense, can no man lay. In an inferior sense, and in reference to the honour conferred on the apostles, as instruments, it is said that believers, who are the church, "are built upon the foundation of the apostles"—not of one apostle, but of the apostles, all the apostles—"and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." As stewards, or upper servants, in great families, bore the keys, so, we are taught, that Peter, and the other apostles, were raised to high dignity in the household of faith; and, in virtue of their divine inspiration, qualified and commissioned authoritatively to declare the doctrines and precepts which were to be received, or rejected. And our Lord declared that men's present and final state should be determined according to these inspired

* 1 John v. 1.

† Matt. xvi. 17.

rules and decisions of the apostles. When we think of these interesting words of our Lord, let us rejoice in the security of his church; and let us have a suitable regard to the written instructions of his inspired servants, according to which we must be either acquitted or condemned.

Referring to the declaration which Peter, for the apostles, had made of our Lord's being the Christ, Luke tells us, that Jesus "*straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.*" There were various satisfactory reasons for this reserve. For example, had the Jewish and Roman rulers been properly convinced that Jesus was the Christ, his death would not have taken place, as the accomplishment of prophecy, and of our redemption, required: for, "if the princes of this world" had known the wisdom of God, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* On the other hand, they being obstinately, wilfully, and sinfully blind to his character, and bent on his destruction, and there being a law that all false prophets and blasphemers, and, of course, especially those who should be so daring as falsely to assume the character of Messiah,† should be put to death; it was necessary to avoid, for a time, all such explicit declarations in words as would have given them a handle to proceed, by an unjust application of the law, prematurely against him. Again, he evidently wished men to infer his Messiahship from his works and his teaching in general, rather than to have it pressed on their reception by positive assertions; and it is plain that this was, at least at first, the way which was most reasonable, most dignified, and most likely to be successful. He directed his apostles to abstain from insisting on this great truth, and even from stating it openly, till the evidence on which it rested was complete, and they could bring it forward with a force of proof which no candid mind could resist. That evidence might be considered as completed by his exaltation, and the outpouring of the Spirit. Accordingly, after that, the apostles were more explicit. Thus, Peter, having spoken of the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, sums up his sermon, on the day of Pentecost, in these words: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

In connection with this charge, our Lord proceeded: "*Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain and be raised the third day.*" As our Lord spoke plainly to his disciples of his being the Messiah, so, from this time, he began‡ to speak plainly of his being a suffering Messiah—an idea very contrary to the carnal notions of the Jews, but very important, and, indeed, quite essential. "The Son of man *must* suffer:" there was a necessity for this, in order to his accomplishing the work of our redemption, and fulfilling ancient prophecy. He also stated to

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

† John xix. 7.

‡ Matt. xvi. 21.

them the necessity, for the same reasons, of his resurrection. To enter on any particular illustration of these points, however, would be an anticipation of what properly belongs to a more advanced period of the sacred history. We shall, therefore, only observe here, that our Lord's devotedness and love are strikingly illustrated by the consideration, that he proceeded in the perfect foreknowledge of all that lay before him; and that after his sufferings were all over, and he had risen from the dead, he said to the two disciples, on the way to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

The disciples were much astonished, and troubled, at this declaration of our Lord, not being aware of the glorious purpose his sufferings were to promote; and Matthew and Mark tell us that Peter "took Christ," that is, probably, took him by the hand, "and began to rebuke him"—tenderly to chide him, "saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But our Lord turned round, and looked on the disciples, knowing them to be of the same mind with Peter, and, with unusual severity, rebuked Peter, saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan" (adversary); "thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest"—relishest—mindest "not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Nay, our Lord now taught, not only that he was to suffer himself, but that all who would be his disciples must expect to suffer also. "When he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also," (as we learn from Mark*), he then, as Luke mentions in the 23d verse, "*said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*" If any man *will*, that is, wish, or be willing, be cheerfully and resolutely minded "to come after Christ," to follow him as a disciple: "he must deny himself." This is a universal rule: it is as applicable now, as it was when Christ walked on earth: and, therefore, it highly concerns us all to attend to its import, and to comply with its requisitions. Let us consider, then, for a little, what is implied in the self-denial to which we are here called. It does not imply a disregard to our own true interest and happiness, for, these are always found, at last, to be inseparably connected with the path of duty. But it implies that we are to be denied to ourselves, as depraved and sinful creatures—that we are to be denied to that spirit which would set up ourselves, our own wills, as the rivals of God—that we are to be denied to everything which would, in any way, interfere with our submission and fidelity to Jesus Christ. More particularly, if we are to be the disciples of Christ, we must be *denied to our own wisdom*. While we are to use the natural wisdom, the reason, which God hath given us, we are not to trust in it as sufficient to show us the way of life. There is more hope of

* Mark viii. 34.

a fool, than of those who are wise in their own conceit. The wisest must not glory in their wisdom. We are to be sensible of our ignorance, and desirous to be taught of God, who "hideth these things from the wise and prudent, and revealeth them unto babes." We must be denied to *our own righteousness*. If we imagine that anything we are, or say, or do, can have merit to procure the divine forgiveness and favour, or render us worthy of Christ, that will be an insuperable barrier to our submission to the Redeemer. We must renounce all trust in ourselves, stand guilty before God, and cast ourselves on his free mercy, by faith in his Son's righteousness. We must be denied to *all obviously sinful propensities and habits*. Christ is willing to save us *from* our sins, but he will not save us *in* our sins. To suppose that we may be saved notwithstanding our continuing in sin, would be to make him "the minister of sin," and to turn the grace of God into licentiousness. "If we would be Christ's, we must crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts;" we must "through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body;" we must "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." We must be denied, not only to what is obviously sinful, but also, to *every earthly enjoyment, when it comes into competition with our regard to Christ*. We must, for example, be denied to those *bodily indulgences* which, though in themselves innocent, when under due restraint, become incompatible with spirituality of mind, when felt to be essential, or very important, to our happiness. We must "keep under our bodies, and bring them into subjection." We must be denied to our *reputation*. Though we are to value a good name in the world, if it can be had consistently with faithfulness to our Lord; we are cheerfully to forego it, if it cannot be retained but at the expense of our conscience. If situated in any degree like Moses, we are to feel and act like him: he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." We must be denied to our *friends*. That is, though we ought highly to value their good will, and to endeavour to preserve it by all means consistent with duty; we must not allow ourselves to be so wrought on by them, however near and dear to us they may be, as to be prevented from following Christ. Should they attempt so to influence us, we must be denied to their solicitations, allurements, and upbraidings. It sometimes happens that the greatest foes to a man's salvation, are those of his own household. In reference to such a case, our Lord says, "He that loveth father, or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." We must be denied to our *property*, so as to be ready to undergo any sacrifice of our substance—to our *ease*, so as to be ready to undergo any torture—

to our *liberty*, so as to be ready to go to prison—and to our very *life*, so as to be ready cheerfully to lay it down, rather than prove unfaithful to our Redeemer. None of those things must move us; neither must we count our life dear to us, so that we may finish our course with joy.

Following out the same strain, our Lord says that, if any man will come after him, he must “take up his cross daily.” This form of expression is borrowed from the circumstance that those who were led out to be crucified were, generally, made to carry the cross on which they were to suffer: and it teaches us that we ought to be ready to undergo any trials which may befall us, and to have even the spirit of a martyr, for Christ’s sake. This implies that the cross, or trouble of some kind, is before us, with which we must lay our account—that while crosses occur daily, or very frequently, every man has some cross, or trial, which may emphatically be called his own—that we are not to go in search of crosses, or, to make crosses for ourselves, or, rashly and needlessly to expose ourselves to trouble—and finally, that we ought readily to take up whatever cross providence may clearly lay in our way, that is, we ought to bear it, not because we cannot do otherwise, and by compulsion, but willingly, and so as to go on thankfully and joyfully under it.

In this way of denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, we are to “follow Christ,” who not only calls on us to show that we are his disciples, but who, in denying himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, at once “suffered for us, and left us an example that we should follow his steps.” Let us, then, examine ourselves by this test. What self-denial are we exercising? what cross are we bearing for Jesus’ sake? If we are following the desires of an unrenewed heart; if we are turning aside from the cross which God lays in our way, or, if compelled to bear it, we are rebelling under it; if we are walking according to the course of this world, and in no way distinguished from those who are of the world; then, whatever we may imagine, or profess, we are not the followers of Christ, we have not the Spirit of Christ, and we are none of his. But, if we have learned to submit our views and will to his; if we count all things but loss, for the excellency of his knowledge and righteousness; and if, by his cross, the world be crucified unto us, and we unto the world: then are we indeed his disciples, and we may rest assured that, having followed him here, we shall be with him hereafter.

Our Lord now goes on to bring forward arguments to this Christian course. “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.*”^{*} Whosoever shall wish to save his temporal life, to escape persecution unto death, by denying Christ, shall lose life in the most important sense, that is, shall come short of heaven, and

* Summum crede nefas animam præferre pudori,
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.

Juven. viii. 79.

shall die the second death, or perish for ever. "*But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*" In other words, he who shall lose his temporal life, or be put to death, for Christ's sake, shall escape endless misery, and gain life eternal. "*For, what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away?*" Suppose a man were actually to get possession of all the riches, pleasures, and honours of the world; these would not be an equivalent for the loss of his temporal life, much less for the loss of his soul, and of eternal life. But, on this weighty text, which would afford ample scope for a whole discourse, we cannot now dwell. Lord, grant that we may form a proper estimate of the relative value of temporal and eternal things, and take all our measures accordingly.

Verse 26. "*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*" We may observe here, that some, alas! many, are ashamed of Christ; and that all may be said to be ashamed of him, who, inwardly feeling any thing akin to the sense of shame, do not receive him and believe in him, and do not openly acknowledge him in their profession and life. In some unbelieving and impenitent sinners, this shame has a reference chiefly to Christ himself, especially to his lowliness, and to his ignominious and accursed death: Christ crucified is to them a stumbling-block and foolishness. In others, this shame is felt chiefly in regard to Christ's words; they are ashamed to profess his humbling doctrines, and practically to observe his self-denying and holy precepts. But all such persons are here taught that yielding to such false shame as this, however it appear to them to be the way to avoid opprobrium, is the certain way to involve them in merited and overwhelming shame at last, when Christ shall come again.

We are assured that the same Jesus who was taken up into heaven, shall in like manner come again: that is, he shall come literally, personally, in the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory. He shall thus come at the end of the world, to raise up all that have died, and to judge the quick and the dead. To them that look for him shall he then appear the second time; but without sin (without sin imputed to him, and without being a sacrifice for sin), "unto salvation." He shall "come in his own glory and in his Father's glory." It is difficult to say how these two kinds of glory are to be distinguished. Perhaps the meaning may be, that, besides the splendour of the glorified body he wears as Mediator, the Father will bestow on him some additional glory when he comes to execute, by his commission, the exalted office of Judge. And he shall come in the glory "of the holy angels," that is, attended by a retinue of angels, who will contribute to the noble solemnity of the scene. At this, his second coming, at the last day, he will be ashamed of those who are now ashamed of him: that is, he will

not acknowledge them, he will disown them with scorn, he will condemn them, and he will punish them with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Think of this, ye whom a sinful shame prevents from avouching Christ to be your Lord, and from walking in his ways: and, as you would avoid indelible disgrace at last, break through the foolish snare that now binds you. Think of this, ye too who are in any way exposed to the reproach of men for Jesus' sake. "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters, but if any of you suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." When your Saviour comes, he will come to confess you before his Father and the holy angels. Whatever, therefore, may befall you, and however many your trials may be, "abide in him, that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

And now, not to return to any of the foregoing topics, let us conclude with considering what may have been the more immediate import of our Lord's declaration to the disciples, and all who heard him, in the 27th verse; and also what useful hints it may still suggest to us. "*But I tell you of a truth, There be some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God:*" or, as in Matthew,* "till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" and, as in Mark,† "till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." You will observe that our Lord had just been encouraging his hearers to espouse, and to be faithful to his cause, by considerations drawn from a future state, and the judgment of the great day. These encouragements, however, though unspeakably important, related to a distant period, and an invisible world; and, therefore, in addition to these, he proceeds to direct their attention to something which was to happen ere long, and which some of them were to witness before they left this earth. The phrase, to "taste of death," signifies to die, in the ordinary and literal sense. It is thus represented, perhaps, as a cup to be drunk of, a something that may be tasted: and we read of "the bitterness of death." In Heb. ii. 9, it is said that Jesus should "taste death" (that is, die) "for every man." Our Lord told those who now heard him, that some of them should see the kingdom of God come with power, or, the Son of man coming in his kingdom, before they departed this life. What, then, was the event to which he referred? It could not be his personal coming at the day of judgment, for that day is still very remote. Nor could it be his coming, as he will come spiritually to reign in the universal spread of the gospel, for that event is still future. The nearest event to the moment he actually spoke, which can be fixed on, is his glorious transfiguration; and some have been inclined to consider that as what he here

* Matt. xvi. 28.

† Mark ix. 1.

intended. But that took place, according to Matthew and Mark, who speak exclusively of the two extreme days, six days—and according to Luke, who speaks inclusively, about eight days after this: we cannot reasonably suppose that our Lord would speak of it as a noticeable circumstance that some of his hearers would then be alive. The next event, and that on which others are disposed to fix, is that after the exaltation of Christ, when the Spirit was poured out from on high, and so many were converted; and that may, perhaps, be considered as included, or, as being the beginning of the fulfilment of this prediction. But as that happened a few months after the time our Lord spoke, neither can it be considered as at all coming up to the full and natural explanation of the saying. If I knew that some important event was to happen a few months after this, the natural way of speaking of it would be, not that some of you will be alive then, but that most of you will, in all probability, live to see it. We are led, then, to look on that as the true interpretation of these words, which refers them, if not exclusively, yet chiefly, to Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, abolish the Mosaic economy, and introduce the full reign of the gospel. This is set forth under the figure of his "coming," that is, his providential coming, as in other places, so especially, in his own striking prophecy in the 24th chapter of Matthew. When Jesus had spoken of the destruction of the temple, the disciples said to him: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It is true that there are difficulties connected with a consistent and full interpretation of the whole chapter, and that there is also in it a typical and literal description of Christ's coming at the last day; but there is no room for doubt as to its applying, in the first instance, to the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, this is just such a period as that, speaking in relation to it, our Lord might be supposed to say that some of those who stood by should not taste of death till they had seen it; that is, that most of them would be dead before it, but some of them would survive it; for it happened about forty years after the time he spoke. His words, too, in the 34th verse of the same chapter of Matthew, are quite in favour of this interpretation: "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." We know that the apostle John, for one, lived till after this period; and some think, apparently with much reason, that this was foretold of him by Jesus, when he said to Peter, in the last chapter of John's Gospel: "If I will that he (John) tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" So also, there is every reason to believe that several more of our Lord's hearers (though no more of the apostles) lived till after that awful catastrophe. Such seems to be the import of this passage, as in relation to those who stood hearing our Lord. And well might he refer to that coming, signal vengeance on his enemies, and interference for

his friends, and proof of his divine mission, as a reason why men should boldly confess him, and be faithful to his cause. Surely, those of his true disciples who lived to witness these scenes, would be completely confirmed in the faith; and those unbelievers who lived to witness them, and still continued unbelieving, would be left without a shadow of excuse.

But what improvement should we now make of these words? I would say, first of all, that what few of our Lord's hearers lived to see, we all know to have been accomplished, and therefore we ought to reap from it all the benefit it is calculated to impart. Let that glorious display of Jesus' power convince us that he is indeed the Messiah, and that it is vain to look for another. Let us take warning, also, by the vengeance which fell on those who denied and crucified him: and let us feel assured that he, who spared not the natural branches, will not spare us if we be unfruitful.

Again, the terms in which this declaration is couched, suggests that there will be another glorious illustration of the Son of man coming in his kingdom—of the kingdom, or reign, of God coming with power, when the universal spread of the gospel shall reduce all nations under the Saviour's victorious sway. And, as the Son of man came in his kingdom at the period already mentioned, though there was no personal appearance of him then, so it is as plain that there is no propriety, but a very great absurdity, in supposing that he will personally appear when he reigns on earth at the now approaching triumph of the gospel. That there are any already born who shall live to see the splendour of that day, it would be rash to affirm. It seems certain, however, that a progress is making to a most desired consummation, and that more glorious things will soon be witnessed in the world. Let the full persuasion of the coming triumph of your Redeemer's cause, even on earth, now confirm you in your devotedness to him, ye who love his name. Should you die before all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of your Lord and of his Christ, you will see nobler things in heaven than even such a sight would be on earth. Think, too, of the moment when you shall see him coming in his kingdom at the last day, to bless and crown all his faithful followers; and say whether you have not every reason to be steadfast. But, indeed, your evidences of the Redeemer's glory, and your encouragements not to be ashamed of him, are not all in reserve; many such are already given you. Yes, his kingdom is come already; he himself is already come with power. He is come to every soul that knows and trusts him. He is come into every heart that loves him. He is come to yourselves. Say not lo here, or lo there!—for the kingdom of Christ, the reign of God, is within you. Cherish, then, more and more, his blessed sway. Yield to all the holy laws, and

hold fast all the great privileges of that kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thus, when your days are fulfilled, and you come to taste of death, its bitterness will soon be passed, and you will be translated from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory.

LECTURE XLVII.

LUKE IX. 28-36.

“ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias. 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him. 36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.”

THE circumstances of our Redeemer's life on earth were, for the most part, obscure and sorrowful. Though he was “ in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.” He laid aside his divine glory, so as not to exhibit it before men; a veil was thrown over it, to hide it from human view; nay, he submitted to shame and sorrow in almost every shape. “ He had no form nor comeliness,” as the world judged—“ no beauty that they should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; they hid, as it were, their faces from him: he was despised, and they esteemed him not.” Yet there were a few passages in his history which formed an exception to this rule, and in which the splendour of the appearance demonstrated, even to the outward eye, the lustre of his character, and his connection with heaven. At the commencement of his humiliation, when he was born into this world of suffering, the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and, when the angel had informed them of the glad tidings of a Saviour's birth, “ suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” At the close of his humiliation, too, his glory shone forth illustriously in all the circumstances of his resurrection, particularly the ministration of angels on the occasion; and more illustriously

still, in his ascension, when, as two angels in white stood by, his wondering disciples saw him taken up into heaven, till a cloud received him out of their sight. So also, in the middle of his public ministry, there was given one signal, visible display of his glory, which must have been most refreshing and instructive to those who actually witnessed it, and which, it is to be hoped, will, by the blessing of God, prove refreshing and instructive to us, while we are, as it were, still accompanying our Lord in a course of meditations on the different parts of his history:—that display was his transfiguration on the mount.

The parallel passages, to both of which we shall occasionally refer, are in the 17th chapter of Matthew, and the 9th chapter of Mark.

“*And it came to pass,*” says Luke, “*about an eight days after these sayings ;*” that is, after he had spoken what is contained in the preceding verses, concerning his own sufferings, the self-denial and faithfulness required of his disciples, and the coming of his kingdom. Matthew and Mark say that it was “after six days ;” the period may have been, as we formerly noticed, six full days, or eight including the extremes ; and this is here said by Luke to have been about eight days.

It came to pass that Jesus “*took Peter, and John, and James.*” It has been objected to revelation, by infidels, that it does not inculcate the virtue of friendship. But the objection is groundless ; nay, the way in which the Scriptures treat of friendship, is one of the many proofs that they proceed from him who formed and perfectly knows human nature. An express command, laid on all men, to form what are commonly called friendships, or peculiarly strong attachments and close intimacies with each other, would have been unsuitable to our mental constitution, and, in many cases, impracticable ; because friendships are generally the result, not of premeditated design, or of efforts of will, but of similarities of temper and likings, and other circumstances not under human control. Scripture does, therefore, all that is proper, and nothing more, in this case. It lays the true foundation for friendship, in that principle of universal love, which is ready to go out with peculiar strength towards those who have a peculiar claim on it, or with whom we are brought into peculiarly close contact. It does positively inculcate the duties of friendship when it is once formed, for, it says, “He that hath friends must show himself friendly ;” and again, “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not.” And it gives us beautiful examples of friendship, as in the case of David and Jonathan, but especially, in the case of Jesus Christ towards some of his disciples. Of his disciples, the three here mentioned, were plainly treated with more favour, and admitted to greater intimacy, than the rest : and even of these three, there was one to whom he was more tenderly attached, than to the other two ; for, John was called, by way of eminence, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” These three, Peter, John, and

James, were the three who were favoured to be present, also, at the raising of Jairus' daughter, and at our Lord's agony in the garden. The sight of the two glorious scenes may have prepared them for bearing the awful night at Gethsemane. In like manner still, a believing view of the glory of the Saviour's person, character, and work, enables us to contemplate, not only without offence, or dismay, but with admiring wonder, his sufferings and death, and is the best preparation for those scenes of distress through which we ourselves may have to pass. We may also observe that our Lord took with him, on this memorable occasion, a competent number to bear testimony to the scene; for, it is at the mouth of two or three witnesses, that every thing must be established.

Accompanied by these three disciples, our Lord "*went up into a mountain.*" Tradition says that the particular mountain was Tabor. Tabor is situated in the north of Galilee; and it is a very lofty mountain, with a plain on its summit. Several of the most remarkable events in our Lord's history took place on mountains. It was on a mount that he preached that long and interesting sermon which is commonly designated from the circumstance. He was transfigured, as is commonly believed, on mount Tabor; he was crucified on mount Calvary, and he ascended from the mount of Olives. A mountain was a very suitable place for this exhibition of his glory; and it was also a suitable place of retirement for that devotion in which he previously engaged. He went up, we are told, into the mountain "*to pray.*" We frequently read of his retiring for this exercise. If it be asked, Why did our Lord pray at all, seeing he was the true God? we reply, He was also man, and, as a human creature, prayer was his duty: he prayed, too, as an example to us; he prayed, as it behoved him to fulfil all righteousness; and he prayed as our great intercessor. The Father saith to the Son, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Our Lord went up to the mountain to pray, and probably (as he frequently did) to spend the night in prayer.

It was "*as he prayed,*" that his transfiguration took place. God has often manifested his signal regard to prayer. Thus, Daniel writes: "And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel" "touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding." The Lord said to Ananias, the disciple, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth." So, on all the three occasions in which an audible voice from heaven bore testimony to our Lord, he was engaged in prayer, namely, at his

baptism—at this time—and, as in John xii. 28, where we are told, that when Jesus had prayed, “Father, glorify thy name, there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Ought we not to consider this, as greatly encouraging us to the duty of prayer? Though we are not to look for miraculous manifestations, we may rest assured that, as to all needful supplies of grace, our heavenly Father will “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Is it not, also, most commonly when believers are in the actual exercise of prayer, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, that the Holy Spirit bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God? But let us consider the circumstances of the transfiguration?

Matthew and Mark say, in one word, that Jesus was “transfigured,” or metamorphosed. His general appearance was that of an ordinary person. According to the passage already quoted, he “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man.” But now, there was a glorious change in his appearance; and, in describing that change, two circumstances are noticed, his countenance and his raiment. Luke says, “*the fashion*,” or more correctly, the appearance, “*of his countenance was altered*.” Matthew says, “his face did shine as the sun.” Something similar to this occurred in the case of Moses, when he came down from the mount; his face shone, and the people being afraid to come nigh, he put a veil on it. The Lord, then, doubtless put high honour on Moses: but that prophet’s honour was derived, he shone with borrowed lustre, with a lustre inferior to that of Christ, and only as a type of Christ. The Son of God’s face now shone with a brightness as of the sun, which no veil could hide; it shone with underived and divine splendour. What a display of glory was this! and how astonishing to think of the appearance which the very same countenance afterwards assumed! How amazing the condescension and love he displayed, when in him were fulfilled the words, “His visage was more marred than that of any man, and his form than the sons of men”—“He hid not his face from shame and spitting!”

But the appearance of “*his raiment*,” also, was altered, and, according to Luke, “*was white and glistering*.” According to Matthew, “his raiment was white as the light;” and according to Mark, “his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller,” or bleacher, “on earth can white them.” These are most striking descriptions of celestial splendour. Of the angel at the sepulchre, it is said that “his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” All the saints in heaven are represented as arrayed in white, to teach us their purity and glory. Still, of all the angels and saints it must be remembered that their glory is derived; and of the redeemed in heaven, it is expressly said, that they “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Christ’s

glory, we repeat, was essential and divine, and far surpassing that of any creature. The appearance which the Son of man made in vision to John, as described in the first chapter of the Revelation, was similar to what he assumed on the mount: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"—"and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." There was now beheld the glory of his divinity itself. This was the great God clothed with honour and majesty, and covered with light as with a garment. Jesus was now manifested to be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." To this visible glory, as well as to the moral display of the divine character, the apostle John, who was present on this occasion, may have some reference, when he says, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Besides Christ's own personal glory, there occurred, at the same time, another most wonderful circumstance. "*Behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory.*" The apostles heard at least some part of the conversation, and gathered from it who the celestial visitors were. They appeared in a glorious form, somewhat similar to what Jesus himself had assumed, and such as is worn by the redeemed in heaven. As for Elias, it is certain that he was in the body, for, like Enoch, he had been translated without seeing death, though he must have undergone the change which Paul tells us the believers shall undergo who are on earth when the last trumpet shall sound. As for Moses, it is vain to inquire how he became visible to mortal eyes. We know that he died, and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab.* The opinion of some that his body was raised for this occasion, is merely conjectural, and not resting on any scriptural authority. It may, however, have been so. Elijah's case is clear.—The glory of the risen saints will be somewhat like Christ's; he will "change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." In this glorious appearance of these two Old Testament saints, we have a proof of the immortality of the soul, and of the happy and glorious immortality of God's people—a proof that "those who have fallen asleep in Christ are not perished." And here, in the case of Elias at least, we have a collateral proof of the general resurrection, and of the change of those then on earth, and a pattern of what will finally be the glorious embodied state of all the saints. From this particular example of intelligent intercourse between Moses and Elias, we may also infer the general rule that, after death, the saints personally distinguish each other with reference to their earthly history; and mutually

* Deut. xxxiv. 5.

form an acquaintance with those who have lived at periods very remote from each other. It cannot escape the serious student of Scripture that there was something highly demonstrative of the divine wisdom in the choice of the two saints who now appeared to do honour, and to bear testimony, to Messiah; the one being, as it were, the representative of the law, and the other of the prophets, or, Moses being the giver, and Elias the restorer, of the law—both most eminent characters, and standing, together, for the whole Old Testament. Moses and the prophets bear witness, in their writings and teaching, to our Lord, and he taught that if men did not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. What they all testified in their writings and words of old, *that* these two now came to testify again personally. Moses came to show that, in Jesus, the typical sacrifices and ceremonies were about to be fulfilled; and Elias, that the prophecies were on the point of receiving their accomplishment at the same time. In their very appearance they do him homage; they, as it were, lay down their commission at his feet; they bear witness that he was Messiah, to be received as Lord of all, and that the dispensation of the law was just about to be abrogated, and that of the gospel introduced.

We are even told what was the subject of their conversation with Jesus, “*They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*” “His decease,” that is, his departure,* his exit, his death. There is something remarkable, too, in the form of expression, this death he was “to accomplish,” or fulfil: it was not a useless suffering to which he was to be driven; but it was a great, a glorious, a blessed work, which he had cheerfully undertaken, and which he was triumphantly to accomplish. The original, too, conveys the idea that he was just about to accomplish, or shortly to accomplish, this death. We are told the general subject, which was deeply interesting; but we are not told the particular way in which the conversation was conducted. We know that the great things concerning the Redeemer’s death were the subject of the prophets’ predictions and deep study long before. “Of which salvation,” says Peter, “the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” And we know that Jesus had this death to undergo, as determined in the divine purpose, as foretold in ancient prophecy, and as necessary to our redemption. “O fools,” (said he, after his resurrection, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus,) “and slow of

* *Ἐξόδου*. The same word occurs in 2 Peter i. 15. It teaches the immortality of the soul, and intimates that the soul is the man, and, at death, does not cease to exist, but only goes elsewhere.

heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself." When Moses and Elias now talked with him on this topic, it was not to instruct him in any thing which he knew not, or which was not present to his mind: they must have been all humility and reverence before him while thus privileged and honoured. As to the particulars of the conversation, without affirming, we may conjecture, that they spoke of the divine counsel and prophecies relating to his death;—of the heavy sufferings which were to lead to it;—of its vicarious and atoning nature—of the love which prompted it—of the blessings which were to flow from it—of the great debt of obligation under which Moses and Elias themselves lay to its retrospective efficacy—of the wide extent to which its saving virtue was to be carried—of the glory which should thence accrue to his Father and to himself, as intimated in such passages as this, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;"—and in general, we may suppose that they spoke of whatever tended to animate him to the deadly but victorious conflict. O what an important topic! and how deeply did it involve all our dearest interests!

The evangelist goes on to say, "*But Peter, and they that were with him,*" namely, James and John, "*were heavy with sleep.*" They seem to have fallen asleep while Jesus was praying, and they thus lost the first part of the glorious sight, and the first part of the wonderful conversation. In this there was betrayed much human infirmity at least, if not sinful carelessness. In like manner, the same three were asleep during a part of Christ's agony in the garden. Thus, some persons are guilty of literally falling asleep, or of paying as little attention as if they were asleep, under the preaching of the word, and even during the solemn exercise of prayer. This is very sinful if not the irresistible effect of absolute bodily weakness; and it is very hurtful, as it prevents them from hearing at all, or from observing those parts of the service which might prove peculiarly suitable, edifying, and refreshing to their souls.

At last, however, the three disciples awoke, and thus were competent witnesses of what passed, in so far as divine wisdom saw fit that it should be observed by them, and made known to the world. It may be observed, too, that the express mention of their awaking is a clear proof that the transfiguration took place in reality, and not in a dream, or any unsubstantial representation. How must the disciples have been struck when they opened their eyes on the celestial glory, which, on the mountain's top, turned the darkness of night into more than the splendour of the sunny day! And what must have been their

feelings when they thus beheld their Lord, learned who the heavenly visitants were, and listened to their delightful discourse!

Verse 33. "*And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here.*" It was indeed good for them; it must have been most profitable, and most delightful. Happy were their eyes, for they saw, and their ears, for they heard such things. In like manner, all who enjoy Christ's spiritual presence, and have a manifestation of his glory in ordinances, may say, "It is good for us to be here." It is good for their knowledge, good for their faith, good for their love, good for their holiness, and good for their comfort. "It is good for me," says the Psalmist, "to draw near to God."—"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Finding their situation on the mount so pleasant and profitable, the disciples wished their stay on it to be prolonged; and, perceiving that Moses and Elias were preparing to depart, or actually departing, Peter, in name of the other two, and for himself, made this extraordinary proposal: "*Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*" He proposed to construct tents, in which they might dwell, and find shelter. This proposal showed, at once, much excellence, and much weakness. There was much commendable in the spirit by which it was dictated. It showed a great veneration and love for the Saviour, and a high value for the presence of the heavenly strangers. It was disinterested, too, as it made no mention of tents for the disciples; and it was made with a becoming spirit of humility and submission, for, according to Matthew, Peter prefaced it with the words, "If thou wilt." At the same time, there was plainly much weakness in this proposal. How could Peter imagine that glorified saints needed any such shelter as that? or that poor earthly tabernacles could have any charms to detain those who had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Considering, too, the ministry Jesus had to prosecute, and the death which, it had just been said, he had to accomplish, how could Peter think of detaining him on the mountain's top? Or how could Peter think it desirable, for himself and his fellow disciples, to take up their abode there, considering the various duties, and especially the apostleship, which they had to discharge? But it is needless to try to contrive a rational account of such a proposal, seeing we are told that he spoke, "*not knowing what he said.*" Astonishment and fear, and yet delight, at what he beheld, overcame him, and made him speak unadvisedly with his lips.

Our Lord made no reply to this proposal; but events quickly showed it to be vain. "*While Peter thus spake, there came a cloud,*" Matthew calls it "*a bright cloud,*" "*and overshadowed*

them." This was, probably, similar to what was called the Shechinah, or glory, of the Lord, that is, the bright cloud, which repeatedly appeared under the Old Testament dispensation, and, in particular, took possession of the tabernacle and temple;* and which, without presenting any similitude, or bodily shape, was the symbol of the immediate and gracious presence of Jehovah. This bright cloud, then, on the mount of transfiguration, was the certain token of the presence of God the Father, who soon spoke from it. What a wondrous addition to the other wonders which then presented themselves to the three apostles! But a sense of the present Deity has always filled the hearts, even of good men, with some degree of trepidation; the apostles, accordingly, "*feared,*" were filled with holy dread, "*as they entered into the cloud,*" which closed around them.

In these solemn circumstances, and while all was reverential silence, "*There came a voice out of the cloud, saying,*" (and including the other clause given by Matthew, the complete saying was this), "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him.*" This testimony is the same which was given to Christ at his baptism, with the addition, however, of the command, "Hear him." He is the Son of God, in respect of his divine nature; and he is the Son of God, also, by miraculous conception, and by express designation to the office of Messiah, for which he was qualified by the Spirit: and all this he was declared and proved to be by his resurrection from the dead. He was God's "beloved Son," the Son of his love, his dear Son—dear to him on account of all his divine excellencies, and all his mediatorial performances. In him the Father "was well pleased"—well pleased with the Son himself for what he was, and what he had done, and was to do and suffer—and well pleased with his people in him, that is, with believers for his sake. "The Lord is well pleased," saith Isaiah, "for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable." The Father closes this great testimony to his Son in the words, "hear him." As if he had said, "Moses and Elias are to withdraw, and to give place to my beloved Son; but their prophecies of him are to be fulfilled; be not troubled, therefore, at their departure, nor seek to detain them. He will be with you, and hear ye *him*.—hear him with attention, hear him with faith, hear him with obedience."

The sequel of this amazing account, as gathered from the harmony of the three evangelists, is, that, "when the disciples heard" the voice, "they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. And Jesus touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid," inspiring them, we may suppose, with strength and courage. "And" "suddenly," "*when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone.*" Moses and Elias had vanished, and the disciples, "lifting up their eyes, and looking round about, saw no man any more, but Jesus only, with themselves." He made no refusal of

* Exodus xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10.

the offered tents, but the event decided the question. The heavenly visitants are gone, and Christ lays aside his visible glory, and assumes his wonted appearance of common humanity. "And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead"—probably, lest till after that great and leading evidence was given, this account should appear as an idle dream or an incredible tale.* In obedience to his injunction, the disciples "*kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*" After his resurrection, however, they made no secret of this wonderful occurrence, but published it to the world, in their preaching, and recorded it in their writings, for our instruction. And well is this authentic record of it entitled to our serious and admiring consideration. We have here a view of the law and the prophets, and a representation of the apostles, and the Son of God himself, the centre and substance of the whole—a view of the church on earth, and in heaven, under its great and glorious head. This was, indeed, by far the most illustrious company ever seen on earth. To conclude with some additional observations:—

Let us, 1. Mark in our Lord's transfiguration, a clear *proof of his divine mission*. Here we have the heavenly inhabitants, and Jehovah himself, bearing testimony to it; and here, in the midst of his humiliation, at which, if there had been nothing of his glory ever manifested on earth, we might have been in danger of stumbling, he is exhibited in his unveiled dignity, and in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Accordingly, one of the witnesses of this event, namely Peter,† afterwards selects this miracle out of many, and thus reasons from it, to prove that the gospel was no dexterously contrived imposture, but true and divine. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.'"

2. We have here a beautiful *example of serious conversation*. "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,"—of Messiah's atoning death, and all the blessings of his purchase. Alas! that the only subject which was found worthy to engage attention when these heavenly strangers met the Son of God below, should be the only subject which is excluded from the conversation of multitudes! "They are of the world," said John, one of the witnesses of the transfiguration, "therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Let us not deceive ourselves; if we know not what it is to speak, and to speak with pleasure, of the atoning death of Christ and

* Doddridge.

† 2 Pet. i. 16.

the important topics connected with it, the mind that is in us must be very different from that of Moses and Elias and Christ; and were we to leave the world thus, we should be quite unfit for the society of the glorified saints and exalted Redeemer. If we do indeed rest our hope on Christ's decease, and feel, in some degree, its constraining influence, let us here feel rebuked for having so often met, even in Christian society, without speaking of any but worldly topics; and let us be admonished and encouraged more fully to avail ourselves of the edification and comfort, which cannot but flow from the interchange of sentiments on that subject, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in which are centred all our hopes for time and for eternity.

In connection with this, we may remark, that, as Jesus spoke of his own decease, and Moses and Elias hesitated not to speak to him of it also; so, it would be well for us to accustom ourselves to think and speak of our own death, and, instead of being offended with others for speaking, to encourage them to speak to us of it; and also, when opportunity serves, and duty calls, prudently and affectionately to speak to them of theirs. Not that there is any propriety or use, except in occasional instances, of speaking as if we were confident that our own, or our friend's death, was just at hand: but, the knowledge and proper consideration of an approaching change, is a likely means of deeply impressing the mind: and especially, the frequent and serious consideration of death, before there is any appearance of its immediate approach, is one of the most likely means, under God, for leading men to prepare for it, and thus enabling them to meet it with composure and safety, when it shall actually arrive. "O, that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!"

3. The affectionate, but inconsiderate proposal of Peter to construct tabernacles, and *to remain on the mount* of transfiguration, should be improved by us. Though it was inconsiderate, it nevertheless discovered much love for Christ, and for religious privileges: and we may safely say that they who have nothing of this feeling—they who, when favoured with these religious privileges in the observance of which Christ is wont to come unto his people and bless them, wish them soon to be over as a weariness to them, and are not disposed to say, "It is good for us to be here," and would not gladly prolong their stay before God, if circumstances permitted—are not Christ's disciples at all. Something very like this sentiment of Peter, though more enlightened and more considerate is that of the Psalmist, which, in their most favoured opportunities, believers, in general, find so congenial to their souls: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." But there ought to be limits to this desire; for it may be carried too far. If in their closet, or

their family, or the house of God, believers get a more than ordinarily clear discovery of the spiritual glory of Christ, and are much refreshed, and drawn out in the exercise of religious affections, they may feel a wish to continue in the same way, and in this same devout and abstracted frame, and to spend their life in pious contemplation: but that is to forget their situation here—it is to forget that this is a state of pilgrimage, a scene of action and of suffering; and therefore, however desirable it is to keep up a right frame of spirit, they must be ready to move on in the path of duty, and to follow Christ whithersoever they are called. And so, with regard to the state of Christians as to prosperity and adversity, joy and trouble—how varied it is below! Now, on the mount, the eminence of enjoyment; and anon, in the valley of suffering. Let us, then, be thankful for whatever favours our Master may send us: but, however happy we may be, let us not imagine that such happiness will always continue; and let us not speak, or think, of making tabernacles. This is not our rest. Here we have no continuing city. Let us seek one to come. If we wish to find a permanent abode of bliss, we must look far higher than to the summit of Tabor, higher than the highest mount of joy on earth, even to the heights of heaven.

4. We may infer, from this account, *how glorious a place heaven must be*. On the mount of transfiguration, heaven might be said, in some measure, to be brought down to earth; and, from what was then seen, some idea may be entertained of what heaven itself is. How glorious was that sight! and yet it was only a small specimen of what is within the veil. There his redeemed people see Jesus as he is, and in all the splendour of his exaltation. There, too, they see the Father face to face, and the Holy Ghost, or the seven Spirits which are before the throne. There they see the whole host of angels; and there they see not only Moses and Elias, but the whole of the glorified saints—a great multitude which no man can number. There, there is no drowsiness, no cloud, no fear. There, there is no conversation of any coming sufferings, and death, either of Jesus, or of his people. When they do speak of his decease, they speak of it as long ago accomplished, and with adoring gratitude and love, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” When they do speak to each other of their own sufferings and death, they speak of them with adoring gratitude, as gone by for ever: they speak of them with tenderness, but without a tear; for God has wiped away all tears from their eyes, and with them, there shall be no more death, neither sorrowing, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. There, they may indeed say, “It is good for us to be here.” There, there is no need of any contrivance to render their state permanent. There is no need to make tabernacles, for in their Father’s house there are many

mansions, and their Saviour has prepared a place for them. May we all be partakers of that glory! But, lest any of us should come short of it, let us, in the

Last place, observe the absolute *necessity of paying due attention to the declaration and the command*, “ *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” Do we, then, receive him in his true mediatorial character? Is he beloved by us? Are we well pleased with him, satisfied and delighted with his person, character, and work? Are we hearing him? Are we attending to him, so as savingly to understand him, believe him, and obey him? If we do not thus hear him, we shall never enjoy his glorious presence, but we shall perish for ever. Let us mark well the words which were spoken by Moses to the fathers, nearly fifteen hundred years before his appearance on the mount of transfiguration: “ A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul who will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” Let us not attempt to excuse our unbelief and disobedience, by saying that we have not seen him in glory, nor heard the voice of God bear witness to him, as on the mount of old. What then occurred has been transmitted to us in authentic records; and all the three witnesses continued faithful to the testimony, notwithstanding persecution. God speaks to us in his Word; and this voice let us hear. He speaks to us by his ministers; their words are his words, when taken from the Scriptures, for Jesus says to his ministers, “ He that heareth you, heareth me.” Let us all, then, as we regard our duty, safety, and happiness, hear him, hearken diligently unto him. May the Lord enable us to incline our ear and come unto him, and to hear, that our souls may live!

LECTURE XLVIII.

LUKE IX. 37-45.

“ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child. 39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. 41. And Jesus answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. 43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.”

THE case of dispossession, with which this passage opens, is also related by Matthew and Mark; and of all the accounts, that of Mark is by far the longest, and most particular—a proof that his Gospel is not an abridgment of Matthew's, but an original and independent work.

“ *And it came to pass,*” says Luke, “ *that on the next day,*” the day immediately following the night which they had spent on the mount of transfiguration, “ *when they,*” namely, Jesus, and Peter, James, and John, “ *were come down from the hill, much people met him.*” Mark, in his 9th chapter, from the 14th verse, introduces the account thus: “ And when he,” Christ, “ came to his disciples,” that is, to those apostles who had not been with him on the mount, “ he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway, all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and, running to him, saluted him.” Their great amazement could not have arisen from the mere circumstance of his coming down from the mountain, nor from any thing which could have presented itself to their notice in his usual appearance, with which, indeed, most of them must have been already familiar: in short, though the reason of this astonishment is not expressly stated, there seems to be no way of satisfactorily accounting for it, but on the very probable supposition that, though our Lord had laid aside the divine splendour of the transfiguration, and assumed his usual form, in the main, yet, a certain uncommon appearance of majesty and glory still remained visible in his countenance, as was the case with Moses, of whom we are told that

his face shone for some time after he came down from mount Sinai. The questioning, or disputation, which the scribes were holding, we may believe, maliciously and triumphantly, seems to have been about the case which had baffled the disciples, and which one very deeply interested came forward to explain.

Luke says, in verse 38th, "*And, behold, a man of the company,*" even the sorrowful father of the afflicted young man, "*cried out,*" loudly and eagerly, "*Master,*" Teacher, "*I beseech thee, look upon my son*" with an eye of compassion—have pity on him, and restore him, "*for he is mine only child,*" which greatly aggravates the affliction. Matthew says that the man came "kneeling down to Jesus, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son." In describing the situation of his son, the man says, according to Luke, "*And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him.*" But, that we may have the full description of his dreadful case, let us take in what is said in Matt. xvii. 15: "He is lunatic, and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water;" and in Mark ix. 17: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, who hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." All these woful circumstances met in this dreadful case;—epilepsy, causing him to fall down wherever he might be, and excessively agitating his frame, and wasting his bodily strength, deafness or dumbness, or the loss of the faculties of hearing and speech; lunacy, or mental derangement; and finally, what we might have noticed first, demoniacal possession, which was in itself a shocking evil, and which caused or aggravated all the other evils, and operated through them.

Verse 40: "*And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.*" We read in the 1st verse of this chapter, that when our Lord sent forth the twelve, "he gave them power and authority over all devils." On this occasion, however, they failed, and that, too, before many who were ready to take every advantage against them. Christ, no doubt, permitted this failure, in order to keep them humble, and sensible of their dependence on him; in order to afford an opportunity of a very signal display of his own power; and in order to punish the unbelief and perverseness which prevailed. He himself, in his reply to the man, opens up, and rebukes, the cause of the failure. "*And Jesus, answering, said, O faithless and perverse generation!*"—in this he seems to rebuke the sins of all who were concerned, particularly the want, or the weakness, of faith, and other infirmities, in the man and the nine disciples, and the total unbelief and perverseness of the scribes. "*How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?*" or bear with you, before you come to a right spirit? Though justly displeased, Jesus would not withhold relief when it was so greatly needed, and so earnestly implored. He said to the father of the afflicted youth, "*Bring thy son*

hither." Then it is said, "*As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.*" According to Mark, "he fell down on the ground, and wallowed," or rolled from side to side, "foaming" at the mouth. And this he would, no doubt, continue to do, till his strength being exhausted, he lay motionless, and as if he would expire.

Let us here turn to the following additional and very interesting circumstances mentioned by Mark.* "And Jesus asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child," or from his childhood. The long standing of the disease rendered it more heavy, and the cure more difficult, humanly speaking, and more illustrious. "And oft times," continues the father, "it hath cast him into the fire, and into the water to destroy him: but if," in so bad a case, "thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us." There was here much unbelief, meeting, however, with some faith. The way of speaking was natural, pathetic, and, without professing to do so, yet indirectly involving Christ's honour in the result of the case. Without resenting the insinuation here implied, and without any formal assertion of his own power, our Lord assured him that, if his son should not be cured, it would be owing to want of faith in him (the father), and not to any want of power in Christ. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The father, then feeling a great struggle in his mind between belief and unbelief, and deeply concerned lest, through a defect in him, his son should fail of being healed, in agony, and with tears, cried out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." He did really believe that Jesus was able to work almost any cure; but when he considered the aggravated nature of this case he could not exclude all doubting as to the result: and he addressed a prayer of some faith to the divine Saviour for more faith—a prayer which was favourably answered, as the event proved.

The curiosity of the multitude was, by this time, greatly awakened to see what Jesus would do; and they came running together, and crowding around. On this, "*Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit,*" "saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." This formal, authoritative, and loud command would call the attention of the multitude, and lead them to connect the cure with our Lord's power and grace. The way in which our Lord here spoke was also, most clearly, a confirmation of the commonly received opinion that this was really a diabolical possession, and not merely disease: had the people been in error as to this, the Faithful and True Witness would never have expressed himself in a manner which necessarily tended to confirm them in the error; he never would have allowed them to believe that Satanic agency was employed where it was not, but would have taken care to have undeceived them. The

* Mark ix. 21.

unclean spirit felt the power of the divine command: "And the spirit cried, and rent" the youth "sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead:"—they saw him in such a swoon, that they thought he would never revive again. "But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose." Matthew says that "the child," or lad, "was cured from that very hour;" he was immediately and thoroughly restored, so that neither the possession nor the diseases returned on him any more. Luke says that Jesus "*healed the child, and delivered him again to his father,*" who would receive him with inexpressible astonishment and joy. Luke also mentions, what might well have been supposed, that "*all*" who were present, "*were amazed at the mighty power of God,*" which this miracle displayed: there is too much reason, however, to fear that but few of them derived any permanent or saving benefit from it.

We read in Matthew that when the disciples inquired of Christ why they could not cast out that devil, he told them that it was because of their unbelief. In order to work miracles, there was a necessity for what has been called "the faith of miracles;" that is, a full persuasion that the power of God would be present to effect what they wished to perform. When this was wanting, they failed; but the smallest portion of this faith, actually in exercise, was sufficient to perform most wonderful things. "Howbeit," said Jesus, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." This intimated that the possession in question was of a peculiarly strong and aggravated kind, and of such difficulty of removal as was enough to stagger the hopes of those who had not firm faith; and, moreover, that fasting and prayer were excellent means for strengthening their faith, while God, too, was generally pleased to confer peculiar honour on his servants after such seasons of peculiar devotion.

It appears, from the corresponding part of the history, as given by Mark,* that Jesus, with his disciples, now left the neighbourhood of the mountain on which he was transfigured, and passed through other parts of Galilee, as privately as he could: and also, that he took the opportunity of instructing his disciples confidentially in the course of his progress. In this connection we are to notice what is said by Luke: "*But, while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did,*" especially at the last mentioned miracle, "*he,*" having proceeded on the journey, "*said unto his disciples,*" during some part of it, "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears;*"—he wished them to pay particular attention to what he was about to say, that it might not only be heard, but heard with interest, take hold of their memory, and affect their hearts: "*for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.*" He had a short time before, as we read in the 22d verse, given them notice of his approach—

* Mark ix. 30.

ing sufferings and death ; and now he repeats that notice, mentioning particularly his being “delivered,” or betrayed, and given over into the power of wicked men. But though, as appears from Matthew and Mark, he used more plain language than this recorded by Luke, and spoke distinctly of his being killed, yet his disciples “*understood not this saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not.*” They had such a general idea of its implying something very dreadful to their beloved Master, as made them, according to Matthew, “exceeding sorry ;” but they had no distinct comprehension of it. They could not conceive how such things could come to pass consistently with their views of the prophecies concerning the glory and the universal and perpetual kingdom of Messiah, and with the expectations of wordly power and grandeur which they thence foolishly entertained. They could not understand how his suffering death could consist with his living and reigning for ever. Hence some of the Jews afterwards invented the notion of two Messiahs—the one a suffering, and the other a reigning Messiah. We, however, can now understand this subject without having recourse to any such error : let us, then, acknowledge him both as our Priest and as our King. As the disciples were, from this cause, very dull of comprehension, so we are reminded that carnal prejudices still blind many to the true meaning and excellence of much that is contained in Scripture, even when the words employed are as plain as possible ; and we ought to be on our guard against whatever would veil from our understandings and hearts the simplicity and glory of the gospel.

Ignorant as the disciples were of the full meaning of what Jesus had said, they were yet “*afraid to ask him of that saying :*” —afraid lest he should rebuke them for their ignorance, and for their disinclination to entertain the idea of his sufferings, as he had lately rebuked Peter ; or rather, afraid lest plain answers to plain questions should dissipate the fond hopes they were cherishing of his, and, through him, of their own earthly grandeur, and confirm them in the most gloomy apprehensions, which were beginning to bear in upon their minds. With regard to the Redcemer’s death in particular, let it deeply engage *our* attention and our hearts as the most affecting indeed, but the most important and most delightful of all subjects. And let us not be afraid, or on any account disinclined, to examine more thoroughly into any question connected with our safety, or comfort, or duty : but let us, in the way of persevering scriptural study, and earnest prayer, apply to Christ for instruction ; and we shall find him a condescending, kind, and able Teacher, who will guide us into all truth by his Word and Spirit, and make us always the happier the more he causes us experimentally to know of his blessed will.

But, returning to the miracle, the history of which we have already briefly gone over, let us conclude with considering

the improvement to be made of it, both in a literal and spiritual sense.

In the first place, this history suggests several useful *hints in regard to literal bodily disease, and especially as to the proper conduct of parents when their children are thus afflicted*. Whether the devil have any influence in producing and aggravating bodily disease at the present day, or not (and who can say positively that he has no such influence?), it is certain that children, however dear to their parents, and even though they be the only children in their respective families, are often seized with various most distressing complaints. In such cases, their parents feel very deeply by sympathy, perhaps sometimes fully as much as if they themselves were the original sufferers. Hence this man, when applying in behalf of his son, said, "Have compassion on *us*, and help *us*." Hence, too, Paul said of Epaphroditus, to whom he was tenderly attached, though not related by blood, "He was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." While parents, in such cases, should bring their afflicted children to those whose profession it is to use the natural means for their restoration, they should by no means neglect to bring them to Christ, by prayer, for his divine help. The maladies of their children should bring them to their knees in earnest supplication: they should come to Christ, kneeling down and beseeching him. Nor, in praying for their sick children, should parents forget that, under God, their recovery may turn very much on their prayer being the prayer of faith. There can be no doubt that without a miracle, and in the way of ordinary providential influence, "the prayer of faith" still often saves or restores the sick. When children are thus delivered from distressing and dangerous diseases, their parents should not only feel that joy which springs from the gratification of natural affection, but should also look on them as restored to them by divine power and goodness, and in that view, be full of pious gratitude and praise. They should, as it were, see the Divine Redeemer taking them by the hand, raising them up, and giving them back to them; and they should, as it were, hear him saying, "Take them, and value them, and care for them, as becomes my disciples; set not your heart on them, so as to idolize them, and devote them not to the world; but let this restoration be a constant memorial of what I have done for you, and train them for me."—If, however, they should not be restored to health, the prayer of faith is still sure of a gracious answer, in some form. Should they be left to linger in trouble, divine consolation and support will be given to them, or to their parents, or both, and a blessing will rest on their souls. Should they die, there will be submission and hope in their death. Many Christian parents, in yielding up an only child to disease and death, have been much comforted and benefited by various scriptural considerations, and especially

by bringing the occasion of their grief into the light of the blessed fact, that God so loved them as to give his only begotten Son for them.

In the second place, this history suggests a great variety of *useful ideas with regard to the salvation of the soul, or deliverance from the spiritual bondage of sin and Satan*. It is a reason of much thankfulness that the influence of Satan on the human body is at present under great restraint; for, if it were not so, the world would soon present a most shocking appearance; it must not be forgotten, however, that his influence on the human soul is still very great, perhaps as great as ever. Men are all naturally under his dominion and influence. Before regeneration, no man belongs to the kingdom of God; but, as there are only two states, all who are not the subjects of God's kingdom, belong to the wicked one. Writing to the Ephesians concerning their state before their conversion, Paul says, "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" and he adds, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Sinners must not think of imputing their sin to Satan, so as to excuse themselves; for they are evil of themselves, and he only works on the evil which is already in them: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed." In this way, however, and finding this handle, Satan establishes an undisputed sway over men, and leads them into a most dreadful state of sin and degradation. The state to which he reduces them does, indeed, very closely resemble that of the possessed youth of whom we have been reading. Did he oftentimes fall into the fire and the water?—they rush into the greatest of all dangers, as if totally unconscious of it, while they expose themselves to the peril of the fire unquenchable, and "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." Was he deaf?—they have ears, but hear not what the Lord says to them in his Word, or what the wise address to them for their good; "they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely." Was he dumb?—though they speak fluently and keenly of the world, and the world heareth them, they seem to have no use of the faculty of speech for the chief purpose for which it was given—they have nothing to say to God, of God, or for God. Was he lunatic?—they, with regard at least to eternal things, labour under an eclipse of reason, and "madness is in their hearts." Was he vexed and torn by the demon?—they, when his baneful influence attains a great height, are harassed and driven hither and thither; there is no peace to them—they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Was

he in danger of being destroyed?—their utter destruction is the object at which Satan aims, for “he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Was he thus affected from his childhood?—they were the children, the slaves of Satan by nature, and from their very birth. Frightful, then, as was the case of this youth, theirs, though not to appearance, yet in reality, is much worse.

When the dismal situation of those whom Satan has thus enslaved is properly considered, surely the importance of deliverance from his power must appear to be very great. In particular, and as this case more directly suggests, those parents who themselves have any true religion, will surely be deeply concerned if they have any children slaves of sin and Satan, and will be most anxious for their deliverance; that is, for their conversion. Deeply indeed will pious parents feel when they have a profligate child, and when they have reason to say, “This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.” It is true that the law by which all the men of his city were enjoined to stone such a one with stones till he died, is no longer in force under the mild dispensation of the New Testament; dismal, however, is his condition, and much is it to be desired that he should be brought to his right mind. But, though children may not be openly immoral, enlightened parents will be deeply concerned for them, if they have any reason to think that they are, in any less obvious way, still under the influence of the wicked one. Let parents, who have any such cause of grief, be instructed and encouraged by this history. Let them bring their wicked and careless children to Christ’s ministers, whose office it is to labour instrumentally for their spiritual restoration: and, as such human means not only may, but must fail, if not accompanied with divine grace, let them not neglect, at the same time, to bring them to Christ himself—that is, to lay their case before him in fervent supplication. Let them pray for those of their children who are so weak that they cannot, or so wicked that they will not, pray for themselves; and let them endeavour, also, to instruct them, and encourage them to pray. Though many means should fail, and though the reformation of the objects of their tender solicitude should, in human estimation, be almost hopeless, still let them not despair; for Christ says, “Bring them to me.”

But this subject is to be considered in a still nearer point of view, and that is, in relation to all of us personally. As already remarked, we see, in the case of this youth before his cure, an humbling, but true, picture of human nature in general, though the most offensive features are more or less prominent in different individuals. If, then, we have any correct idea, however feeble, of our real sinful and miserable thralldom, how anxious should we be for personal deliverance from it! With the view of obtaining this emancipation, all the means of grace ought to

be diligently used: and, at the same time, we ought to be practically convinced that these means will never succeed of themselves, without the power of Christ, and confidence in that power. The failure of the disciples in this case may be considered as teaching the evil consequences of the want, or weakness, of faith, both in ministers and in people. For our want of success we are ready, it may be, to blame the people, and the people to blame us: but is there not a fault on both sides? Were there more prayer, more mortification to the world, and more simplicity and confidence of faith in us who minister to souls, Christ would honour our ministry with a much greater number of remarkable conversions, and with much greater usefulness to his own disciples. It is good to be diffident of ourselves; but it is not good to be diffident of our Master, and of his grace. When unbelief bears in upon a minister, it is as when his adversary's sword falls on a combatant's arm, or right eye, "his arm is clean dried up, and his right eye is utterly darkened;" he has not the discernment, nor the heart, nor the power, to achieve any thing of consequence; his Master, being distrusted by him, leaves him shorn of his strength, unnerved and powerless: but when he is confident of the truth, and, in God's own measure, of the success of his cause, then "his bow abides in strength, and the arms of his hands are made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob:" through faith, out of weakness he is made strong, he waxes valiant in fight, and turns to flight the armies of the aliens; so that of the Lord's enemies, some are brought to willing obedience, and many more are constrained to yield a feigned submission.—Nor is faith less necessary on the part of the people. The cases of some of them may be very bad; but when faith comes, the very worst of them take a favourable turn. Let us all, therefore, expect great things, and aim at great things, on the right ground of humility and faith; and we shall realize great things. According to our faith, so shall it be unto us. Let every sinner seek the commencement of the principle of faith in his soul, where it is not yet implanted, and let every believer seek an increase of faith. Let the Christian profess faith as far as he has it; and let him pray to Christ for more, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let us here be reminded, too, of the necessity and ground for believing that Jesus is both able and willing to save us. This man had some remaining doubt of Christ's ability, and not of his willingness, for he said, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." On the other hand, the leper* doubted of Christ's willingness, and not of his ability; for he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." In the one case, Jesus proved his ability by the cure; and in the other, he said, "I will," and the cure also followed. Let us beware, then, of these two different errors, by both of which the honour of Christ and our own interests suffer. Why should we doubt

* Luke v. 12.

his willingness, his compassion, after all that he has already done and suffered to manifest his love towards us? And why should we doubt his power, after such demonstrations of it as that in this passage? The fact is, that Satan, powerful and daring as he is, cannot stand before him. This was often proved during his abode on earth. This is certain from his atoning death on the cross; for, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." This is certain, too, from the great design which brought him down from heaven to earth; for, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Most assuredly will he deliver from the thralldom of sin and Satan, all who truly apply to him, however dreadful their condition. It frequently happens, indeed, and it is of importance for those who are under any degree of conviction to be aware of this, that as the devil, at the very time the youth was coming to Jesus, and just before he came out of him, threw him down, and rent him sore—so the mental struggle is the greatest, just when the power of sin and Satan is about to be overthrown, and the reign of grace to be established in the soul. When the adversary sees conviction arising in the souls of sinners, he is exasperated, aware that it is then, if ever, he is to carry the day; and when he feels that he cannot keep them under his dominion, he determines to do all he can to vex them—"he cometh down, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." In alliance with the world, he labours to efface their good impressions by amusements, and enticements, and flatteries, or to overpower them with ridicule, and various kinds of opposition. In such cases (for the struggle is not always so great), the transition from mere natural life to spiritual is something like the transition from natural and spiritual life to eternal; that is, agonies, as of death, are the commencement of a better life. This struggle could never prove favourable in its issue, were it not for the power of divine grace: but, in all cases in which the Saviour begins to work, he effects the rescue of the captives.

Now, would to God that all of you, who are in the dismal state of which we have been speaking, would come to Christ for deliverance! Do you say that, though you cannot deny that you are not what, in strict language, may be called religious, yet you are by no means in so bad a state as this under review? and do you say that it is altogether out of the question to speak of you as slaves to the wicked one? We have no wish to fix on you any such charge, if you can produce satisfactory evidence to the contrary. But, we fear, in granting that you are not, strictly speaking, religious, you have granted, in substance, though you have expressed it in softer and less alarming terms, everything implied in the charge which you are anxious to repel. Inquire, however, whether the general charge may not be brought home to you, more palpably, under some of the follow-

ing particulars. Are you addicted to any impurity?—is not that a proof of your being subject to “the unclean spirit?” Are you guilty of envy, or of hatred, which partakes of the guilt of murder, or of violating truth?—then these words are undeniably applicable to you, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” Are you devoted to the things of this world?—then you have yielded to the diabolical temptation: “All these things will I give to you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Have you ever withstood the servants of God, and sought to turn away any from the faith?—so did Elymas, whom Paul declared to be full of subtilty, and all mischief, a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness. Are you wilfully and habitually guilty of any sin?—“He that committeth sin is of the devil.”* Are you wayside, careless, and unimpressed hearers of the word?—“The devil cometh and taketh away the word out of your hearts, lest you should believe and be saved.” Is the glory of the gospel hid from your eyes, and its power unknown to your hearts?—“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not.” Or, under the cloak of religion, have you betrayed the Son of man?—remember who it was that put it into the heart of Judas to betray him. Are you, with the name of Christians and a fair profession, formalists and hypocrites?—“I know,” saith Christ, “the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.” Consider these points well; and see whether you cannot find, in some of them, what convicts you. Your invisible enemy approaches, and makes good his influence, in various ways adapted to your different dispositions; and it is even said that Satan is sometimes “transformed into an angel of the light.” But, to bring the matter to the shortest issue, you were Satan’s subjects by nature; that is, you were guilty and depraved, and therefore his fit instruments, and unless you have been entirely changed, you are his subjects still. Should a struggle arise while he seeks to retain you, and you strive to escape from his power, beware of yielding the contest; for, if you do, your last state will be worse than the first. Whatever exertions he may make, and stir up others to make, to keep you back, do you come to Christ, beseeching him to look upon you and help you; and he will give you deliverance. May God give you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that you may recover yourselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

How thankful ought those of you to be, who, having come to Christ, are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan! Give thanks unto the Father, “who hath delivered you from the power

* See also 1 John iii. 10.

of darkness, and hath translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son." Though the enemy shall never again entirely prevail over you, he may return after a season, and obtain a partial advantage. Remember that, in giving the Corinthians a certain caution, Paul says, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." Maintain the superiority you have gained; maintain it in the way of humility, of avoiding temptation, of faith, and of prayer. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—"Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Thus the Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly; and you shall be more than conquerors through him who hath loved you.

LECTURE XLIX.

LUKE IX. 46-50.

"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. 49. ¶ And John answered, and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us 50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

THIS passage contains two different subjects—the settlement of the question as to precedence in the kingdom of God—and the way in which one who cast out devils, in Jesus' name, though not of the company of the apostles, nor attending on the Saviour's ministry, was to be viewed and treated.

We have here, first, the settlement of the question as to precedence in the kingdom of God: "*Then there arose a reasoning among them,*" that is, among the disciples, "*which of them should be greatest.*" The parallel passages are in Matthew xviii. 1, and Mark ix. 33. Referring to Mark, we find that the dispute had arisen during their journey towards Capernaum, and that our Lord called them to account for it, in a house in that town, saying, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace," being unwilling, no doubt, and ashamed, to confess the truth; "for, by the way, they disputed among themselves who should be greatest:" or, as it is in Matthew, "who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Now, in all probability, it was a radical mistake as to the nature of that kingdom which chiefly led to this vain controversy. The disciples were looking for the establishment, by Christ, of a temporal kingdom on earth, by the overthrow of the enemies of their nation, and his assumption of visible and kingly pomp and power; and it was with the utmost difficulty, and long after this, that they were brought to understand that his kingdom was to consist in the reign of the gospel in the heart and life of believers on earth, and in the future glory and happiness of his saints in heaven. Thence it was, that instead of seriously inquiring what were the qualifications necessary to being at all members of his kingdom, or church, here and hereafter, and instead of inquiring how they might become not only members, but eminent members—which inquiry might have

been proper and useful—they entered into a foolish and hurtful dispute as to which of them, personally considered, should occupy the chief place under Christ, in his temporal reign, on which they were fondly calculating: and, if their views, at this moment, did at all include spiritual and heavenly things, they were very confused, and characterized by most unbecoming ambition and pride. Though we are not told what arguments any of them urged to establish his claim to be advanced to the office of prime minister in the expected new government, it is not difficult to conceive what some of them might have said. Thus, James the Younger, and Jude, were nearly related to Jesus, and might have calculated on that connexion securing for them his peculiar favour. Peter might have rested on his great zeal, and the distinguished notice which Jesus had taken of him on various occasions. John might have looked forward, with high expectations, as the beloved disciple. Andrew might have said, “I was first called, and therefore expect to be first promoted.” Even Judas might have said, “I carry the bag, and must therefore be surely appointed at least chief treasurer.”

Whatever may have been the arguments they advanced, no wonder that they hesitated to acknowledge to Jesus that they had been engaged in such a discussion. Jesus, however, “*perceived the thought of their heart*,” and heard everything they had said, as they supposed, in secret; and their attempt at concealment was vain. Though they held their peace at first, yet we find, from Matthew, that they at last confessed, and even put a question to our Lord, with the view of having the dispute settled. He did settle the dispute; but in a very different way from what any of them expected. He “*took a child and set him by him*,” in the midst of the twelve whom he had called together; and “when he had taken him up in his arms,”* he directed their attention to him as a sensible sign; and then gave an authoritative, verbal decision of the controversy.

But, that we may have a full account of what our Lord now said, let us take in what we read in Matthew. Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” This declaration was peculiarly applicable to the state of the disciples’ minds at that time; and yet, it embodied a momentous truth of universal application—a mode of teaching which Christ very often employed.

Let us consider how little children furnish an apt emblem of conversion, or rather, of those who are being converted. It is not as to their being absolutely holy and innocent, and not standing in need of pardon and regeneration; for, the very reverse of this is the fact: but, it is as to some traits in their disposition, when they are viewed comparatively with unconverted adults. “Though not innocent, strictly speaking, they are comparatively harmless; as the young, even of the most

* Mark.

ferocious animals, are at first innoxious, but soon begin to discover the nature of that stock from which they spring."*

More particularly, and in reference to those qualifications in which the disciples now showed that they were very deficient, and yet of which we must all be possessed, if we are to be saved ;—little children are *comparatively humble*. Whatever seeds of evil may lurk in their minds, it is almost impossible that they should imagine themselves equal to those who are grown up. They are almost unavoidably sensible of their inferiority and dependence. And this is the state of mind towards God, to which we, as sinners, must be brought. Let us not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think ; but let us think soberly. Let us not imagine that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing ; but let us feel and confess that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Let us acknowledge and deplore our utter guilt, condemnation, and depravity : and let us rely on the divine mercy and aid, which are ready to be extended to us, through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Intimately connected with this disposition of humility is a disposition of *teachableness* ; and of this, too, children are, in a considerable degree, possessed. Aware that their parents and teachers surpass them in knowledge, they look to them, that they may learn of them ; and they are, at first, very much disposed to believe and receive, without gainsaying, and without doubt, whatever they tell them. In this, too, we mark an essential feature in the character of true converts, in relation to God. They are no longer wise in their own conceit ; but, as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. They look to their heavenly Teacher, both for information in those things which it is necessary for them to know and to believe, and also for grace to open their understandings, and to enable them to believe. Thus, they become the spiritual babes, to whom the Lord reveals those great things which he hides from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.

Once more, here, children are *comparatively free from worldliness and ambition*. This world does not yet obviously appear to be their idol. They do not form plans, or labour, for the riches and the honours of public life. They readily associate with their inferiors, and do not aim at surpassing competitors for exalted stations. Now, in this, the disciples appear to have been very deficient, though the disposition must be cultivated by all true Christians. They must be on their guard against whatever may amount to a spirit of worldliness, sinful emulation, and envy. This is that childlike disposition of weanedness from the world, which is so beautifully described in the 131st Psalm : "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty ; neither do I

* Scott.

exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

It is too true that children soon begin to show dispositions very different from these, and are ready, from the innate depravity of their hearts, to be lifted up with pride, and to follow worldly maxims, and seek worldly pre-eminence above all things: but it is plain, that while they are very young, they are characterized by comparative humility, teachableness, and indifference to the world; and, therefore, in so far, manifest those dispositions which are fit emblems of the graces which constitute the very essence of true Christianity. We see, then, how our Lord here teaches, both that without these graces, in some degree, men cannot be the subjects of his kingdom at all; and also, that the more believers are distinguished for these graces, the higher rank they now bear in the Church below, and the greater will be their happiness and glory, at last, in heaven above.

But, in addition to this declaration concerning the necessity of being converted, and becoming like little children, our Lord said to his disciples, as it is related here by Luke, "*Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me.*" Jesus did not mean to confine the application of this saying to the particular child then in his arms, or to any child, or any children, in the literal sense; this appears, not only from the reason of things, but also from the way in which the saying is given by Matthew: "Whoso shall receive one such child in my name, receiveth me." It is, no doubt, a duty to be kind to children literally so called: but Christ here refers chiefly to little children in the spiritual sense; that is, to those humble ones who have become his subjects—to his disciples, all of whom he calls his "little children," and "children;" as when he says, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you"—"Children, have ye any meat?" Whosoever shall "receive such"—that is, shall listen to them, if they are teachers, and whether they are teachers or not, shall entertain them, and be kind to them, for Christ's sake—he declares that he will look on such reception as the reception of himself in his mediatorial office, and such kindness as if it were shown to himself personally. And he adds, "*Whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me.*" Such a reception of the Son, is to receive the Father. There is no true religion except that which acknowledges and receives Christ as the Saviour. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."—"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also. Very nearly parallel to this passage in Luke, and illustrative of its whole bearing, are the words of Christ* to the apostles, when he sent them forth: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that

* Matt. x. 40.

receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." In like manner, the Redeemer will say to his people, in the great day of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Perhaps the connexion of this declaration with that recorded in Matthew respecting the necessity of being converted, and becoming little children, may have been this:—the disciples may have been fearing that if they became so humble as Christ required, they would be almost universally rejected and despised; and it may have been in order to dissipate that fear, that he assured them that some would receive them well, and that he would mark such reception of them with great approbation, as being virtually the reception of himself. And so, also, on the contrary, as appears from Matthew, Jesus thus expressed himself with regard to those who should reject any of his disciples, and offend them, or cast a stumbling-block in their way: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Drowning was one mode of inflicting capital punishment in some ancient nations; and, in order to secure their sinking, the criminals had sometimes heavy stones tied about their necks, or were rolled up in sheets of lead. Hence, these words of our Lord were a proverbial way of expressing dreadful and certain destruction. May such rejection, and unworthy treatment of Christ's ministers and people, and, of course, of Christ himself, be far from us! Let us also consider well whether we have that evidence of our having received Christ himself, which consists in having received his messengers, and in loving, and being kind to his people for his sake. Whose company do you most desire, and most relish? Are we most happy to visit in their houses, and to receive into ours, and in any place to meet the profligate, or at least, the gay and the worldly? Or, do we, with most satisfaction, welcome and go to meet those meek and lowly ones who, having received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk in him? Let us not be deceived: according as we voluntarily cleave to the one party, or to the other, here, so shall we be assorted by the Judge of all hereafter.

Upon the whole, the sum of what our Lord taught, on this occasion, is contained in the last clause of the 48th verse: "*He that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*" Instead of fixing, by name, on the disciple who was to be the greatest—instead of encouraging the worldliness and ambition, or the spiritual pride, of any of them, Jesus declared that whosoever of

his disciples should be the least in his own estimation, and most remarkable for condescension and humility, the same should stand highest in his esteem, and be most distinguished by marks of his favour.

On these three verses, we may yet make the following additional observations.

First of all, *these verses are quite conclusive against the alleged supremacy of the apostle Peter.* If our Lord had already raised him, or if it had been his intention to raise him at any future period, to any such primacy as the Romanists pretend, our Lord could not have remained silent with regard to the subject on this occasion. The disciples had been disputing among themselves, and they had at last asked Jesus who of them should be the greatest: but instead of designating Peter, or any other apostle, as the chief, he gives such an answer as quashes the inquiry, and is totally inconsistent with the idea of any such superiority, and plainly subversive of the Papal system.

Here the opportunity for teaching Peter's supremacy was direct and inviting, had the Saviour intended any thing of the kind; and yet he not only teaches no such thing, but teaches the contrary. This argument is direct and plain; whereas the reasoning on the other side is indirect, inferential, and easily set aside. Satisfactory, however, as this argument is in itself, it acquires additional force from the circumstance that, as appears from the order in the Gospel according to Matthew, our Lord expressed himself in this way *after* he had said to Peter,* "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church;"—"and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Now, whatever may have been the exact and full meaning of these words, that they did not imply the official superiority of Peter over the rest of the apostles, is clear from the way in which, some time after, our Lord expressed himself, as recorded in the verses which we have just been considering.

Again, this part of the passage is *subversive of the idea of any temporal, personal, visible reign of Christ with his people on earth.* The great body of the Jews erred in expecting Messiah to appear in that way, and thence rejected Jesus and his spiritual kingdom. Even the disciples themselves were here looking for a temporal reign, and contending for the chief place under his government: and it was with difficulty, and only after a long course of instruction, and experience, that they were driven from the groundless expectation. After the lessons read to us in their errors, we shall exhibit a still more lamentable proof of weakness of judgment, and inattention to the general scope and just interpretation of Scripture than they exhibited, if we do not perceive that Christ's kingdom is not now, and never will be, of this world, in that sense, and that he reigns in the best, and noblest, and truly scriptural sense, when he reigns, as he does already reign to some extent, and as he will at last reign universally.

* Matt. xvi. 18.

over the hearts of men, by his grace on earth, and where he reigns with them in glory, in heaven.

For ourselves, too, let us remember the *necessity of conversion*. There is a necessity, in order to salvation, for that first, great, and general turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, which is most commonly called conversion, and of which Peter speaks, when he says, "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And, though we may have been thus converted, we still need, in order to spiritual prosperity, that conversion which consists in turning from any partial errors and sins into which we may have fallen. Peter was a believer long before he denied his Master; but still his Master said to him, in reference to that latter period of his history, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Farther, we infer from these verses, that as there are *different degrees of estimation in which Christ's people are held by him in this life, so there are different degrees of happiness and glory conferred on them by him in the next*, and that both correspond to the real spiritual excellence of character to which they now attain. This is plainly implied in our Lord's speaking of who should be "great," and "the greatest," whatever partial errors the disciples may have been labouring under. It is no sufficient objection to this to argue as if the consideration of the meritorious cause of salvation, or the righteousness of Christ, being absolutely perfect, and the same in all, the salvation itself must therefore be in every respect exactly the same. Most true it is that, as the title is the same in itself, all believers are equally *entitled* to admission into heaven; they are all equally justified, and, in fact, they do all equally and completely enter into heaven. Nay, heaven is the same, in itself, to all who enter into it. They are all in one place, one country, one city—one house. They are all blessed in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in the society of the same saints and angels; and they all serve God day and night in his temple. Still, it will not follow from all this, that their happiness is equal. It will not follow from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, unless we adopt the very erroneous opinion, that his righteousness is imputed not only for the justification, but for the sanctification of his people, and that hence their sanctification is out of themselves, and in all cases the same, and incapable of any increase. Nor will it follow from the sameness of heaven in itself, unless it be true that the same things always affect different persons exactly in the same way, and to the same degree. That this is not true is abundantly plain. Thus, a number of persons will be affected with higher degrees of pleasure by the same beautiful view, or the same exquisite music, or the same admirable book, or the same scientific discovery, or indeed, by any one interesting thing; according as their genius and taste, their previous preparation, and degree of culture, enable them more completely to enter into the spirit of what may engage their

attention. In like manner, we must conclude that the same rule will hold good in heaven.

Nor is there any solidity in the objection, that this doctrine countenances self-righteousness, as it does not imply that any are indebted to themselves for their superior degrees of happiness any more than for their superior degrees of holiness. All is of grace: and God alone makes them to differ. And then, it is not difficult to perceive how the happiness of heaven, instead of being destroyed, or lessened, by the diversity in question, must be established and enhanced. Circumstantial variety seems to be as necessary as substantial harmony, to the existence of interesting society. Suppose no difference existed between the state of any of the saints in heaven; suppose they all had the same degree of knowledge, and spiritual excellence, and resemblance to the divine image; suppose the appearance, and reflection, and feelings, and glory, and enjoyments of them all were exactly the same: what an insipid state of society would that be, in so far as human beings are concerned! To know one of them, would be to know them all; and indeed, knowing himself, no individual would have any inducement to cultivate the acquaintance of any other individual. Such a state of things would hardly deserve to be called society. The saints would be, as it were, so many duplicates of each other; and none could be the wiser, or the better, or the happier, for his neighbour. It is not thus, we may be sure, that the God of infinite wisdom has determined that the celestial society shall be constituted. They are all intelligent, all holy, all glorious, and all happy: yet they exhibit endless variety, so that every one will be imparting and receiving pleasure and instruction, and will be constantly beholding around him something new and interesting; and thus, the whole system will be improving and brightening for ever. And this is what Scripture plainly teaches: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead."

Now, the obvious practical bearing of this doctrine is as a motive with believers to diligence in the divine life. There is a contracted selfishness which reason and Scripture equally condemn: but there is an enlightened regard to self-interest which they both approve, and which it is a mere affectation of disinterestedness to undervalue. The doctrine is, that, to those who are in a safe state, the reward of grace shall be according to the progress they make in spiritual excellence: and the corresponding feeling should surely be to desire to increase more and more, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness. Nor, must we fail to observe the high place which is here given to the particular grace of *humility*. It is found in the regenerated soul from the first, and it is the brightest ornament of the most exalted Christian at the last. Let us ever remember the words of our Lord:

“He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Once more here, let this part of the sacred history put all Christians on their *guard against all unseemly disputes, such as that into which the disciples are here represented as having fallen*. The reproof they received from Christ for having thus contended while they were on their journey to Capernaum, may justly be considered as an admonition to believers, through the whole journey of life, not “to fall out by the way.” Contentions between Christians, even when the matter in dispute is a proper one, are very unbecoming on the side of the party in the wrong, and too often very unbecoming as to the manner in which they are conducted on both sides: but those contentions are more particularly scandalous and hurtful, in which they contend for pre-eminence in worldly distinction, or in reputation for piety. Only by pride cometh such contention; and, alas! even good men are far from being superior to its influence. Pride is so deeply rooted in the human mind, that it is not entirely eradicated in the renewed: it still lurks in their breasts, and sometimes breaks out in their conversation and conduct. They are known, at times, to contend for superiority, rather than for truth and righteousness—for superiority in argument, or influence, or temporal honour, or fame for religious attainments. It is also very far from seemly for one Christian to fix on another as an exclusive favourite, and insist, to the disparagement of every one else, that he is the first in ability and character, and will be the first in the future reward. It is still more unseemly and offensive to others, as it must be still more hurtful to himself, if indeed, it be at all consistent with the existence of true piety, for a man to fix on himself as the favourite whom he is to blazon and exalt, and to say, or to be known to think as if he would say, “Who is equal to me? How much do I excel in goodness of heart, knowledge, zeal, exertion, usefulness, and every thing that is respectable! Such a one may now seem to be outstripping me, but I shall rise above him at last; for, to whom will the king delight to do honour more than to myself?”—We are struck with the odiousness of this spirit when it goes to such an excess as this: let us, then, be on our guard against all approaches to it. In whatever degree it may exist, or however much it may be concealed from men, Jesus, our Master, knows it well; and it is ever most offensive in his sight. If it exist at all in the heart of any of us, may the Lord bring it to our notice by the light of his Spirit, and the awakened energy of our conscience, that we may be ashamed of it, and confess it, and forsake it. Let us conscientiously attend to these scriptural directions: “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.”—“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.”—“Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”

But let us proceed to consider, shortly, the other subject of this passage, as contained in the 49th and 50th verses. "*And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.*" "John answered and said"—this mode of expression does not here imply that any question was put to John by our Lord; it merely intimates that the apostle addressed him thus as he was going on with his instructions in the way mentioned just before. Probably, what Jesus had been saying with regard to the reception due even to the weakest disciples, reminded John of what he and the other disciples had done in the case which he describes. Whether he was now beginning to suspect that they had therein done wrong, or was looking for commendation, or was merely desirous of receiving explicit directions as to the proper way of proceeding in such a case, does not clearly appear. Nor have we any particular information as to who the man spoken of was, or what was his history, or what opportunities he had enjoyed of being instructed in the gospel. It is not unlikely that he was a follower of John the Baptist, and had been so far informed by him, and perhaps also by occasionally hearing Christ and his apostles preach (though he did not regularly accompany them), as to have been led to believe in Jesus so as to work miracles in his name, and by his power. As to his not following Christ habitually, that may have been owing to his not being yet prepared to leave all for his sake, or to the smallness of his attainments in knowledge and grace, or to his not being expressly called to follow, or accompany him in the literal sense. But, however that may have been, as he proceeded in the name, and sought to do all to the honour of Christ, there is no difficulty in seeing how the gift of miracles might have been imparted to him, in perfect consistence with the glory of God and the interest of the gospel. This man's miracles are evidently spoken of as real miracles, and not as pretended miracles, or abortive attempts. This was not a case like that of the seven sons of Sceva, vagabond Jews, exorcists, of whom we read in the 19th chapter of the Acts, who took it upon them to call over them who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, but were foiled in their endeavour. This man actually performed miraculous cures.

When the apostles saw him so employed, they "*forbade him,*" they commanded him to desist. This was very rash, and their rashness led them into a great error. They ought, at least, to have consulted Christ before taking this upon them. John honestly told Jesus the reason of their forbidding the man: "*We forbade him, because he followeth not with us.*" He was not one of the apostles, nor even one who usually accompanied them: they, therefore, seemed to think that his working of miracles was derogatory from the honour of the apostles, and a usurpation of their office—that, in short, he had no proper

authority to proceed in that way, and that he ought therefore to be restrained. This was not unlike what was said to Jesus himself, by the chief priests and the elders, in the temple, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" In both instances the miracles themselves were sufficient authority.

Jesus said, "Forbid him not"—do not interfere with him—let him go on. For this direction he assigns two reasons. One of these reasons is stated only by Mark (ix. 39), "For there is no man who shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." It is true that the power of working miracles was no certain proof of saving faith and a state of grace, for, Christ himself says,* "Many will say unto me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." But, working miracles in Christ's name always implied at least a profession of faith in him, and was quite inconsistent with openly opposing the gospel, and reviling him as an impostor, and a blasphemer. There was, therefore, no evil to be apprehended to his cause from the miracles of this man; nay, they evidently tended to forward it.

The other reason given by our Lord in support of his decision, is recorded both by Mark and by Luke, and, according to the latter evangelist, in the passage before us, stands thus: "For, he that is not against us is for us," or on our part. It will occur, at once, that this declaration, though not exactly the opposite, is the converse, of our Lord's other declaration in Luke xi. 23: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." The inconsistency is only in appearance, however, for both declarations are true and important in the connexion and sense in which they are respectively introduced, and intended to be applied. In the case in the 11th chapter, the reference is to the difference between the friends of Christ and the friends of Beelzebub—the supporters and the opposers of the gospel. *There* can be no neutrality: those who do not there rank among the Saviour's friends, must be reckoned among his enemies. *Here*, however, the reference is to the difference between the very enlightened and consistent friends of Christ, and his less enlightened and less consistent friends, or, at least, professing friends. The latter, though inferior to the former, do yet support his cause; they are far from acting in opposition to him, either professedly or really; they are not against him, but for him: and therefore, instead of being renounced and disheartened, they are to be acknowledged and encouraged, and to be assisted to the attainment of greater propriety and consistency of Christian conduct. The disciples certainly discovered on this occasion a want of proper liberality,

* Matt. vii. 22.

and something of a spirit of envy. Their conduct was very like that of Joshua,* who, notwithstanding all his noble qualities, erred in the case of Eldad and Medad. When these two men prophesied in the camp, without having gone out to the tabernacle, Joshua said, "My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"

Let us inquire, in conclusion, *how this portion of sacred history is applicable to ourselves.* Without further reference to what was miraculous, we may view the general spirit which our Lord here inculcates, as deserving the careful attention of different denominations of Christians, in their manner of judging and treating each other. If this genuine liberality and charity were more attended to, much heart-burning and mischief in private society, and in the Church, would be prevented. When we think, or speak, of the state of private individuals, we ought not to suppose, or affirm, that grace is confined to those of our own party—to those who walk exactly with us; nor ought we to hold it as certain that in no instance is the saving grace of God communicated to those who have not the full benefit of the Christian ordinances. And with regard to those who preach the word, we ought not to suppose that the divine blessing is confined to the ministrations of those who belong to our own branch of the Church: nor are we to presume to "forbid," or seek authoritatively to stop, those who do not labour in our own most approved way, or even in the most scriptural way. Even where the light may be but partial, and the motives mixed, we are not to interfere in any such way; but we are to rejoice if the truth, in any considerable measure, be published, and good, in any degree, be done. This is certainly the spirit recommended by the example of the apostle Paul.† "Some," says he, "preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or of truth, Christ is preached: and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."—It is, no doubt, of much importance, that all things connected with religion should be done "decently and in order," and in particular, that there should be a regular induction into the ministry; but, let us take heed of proceeding in such a way, in support of what we conceive to be the unity of the Church, as would prevent the spread of the truth. If not even the apostles were allowed to stop this man, much less can any ecclesiastical, or civil authority, now be justified in any similar attempt.—We may also here remark, that the desire of pre-eminence for ourselves, or for our party, is very apt to lead us to reject good men. The apostle John says, "I wrote unto

* Numb. xi. 24.

† Phil. i. 15.

the church : but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not."

It is of great importance, too, for real Christians to act on the principle that "those who are not against us are for us." We should always cheerfully acknowledge, and prudently avail ourselves of, whatever, in others, is favourable to the truth, even though they may not be so far advanced as is to be wished ; and we should remember that it is foolish in itself, and hurtful to religion, to drive away from us, and to irritate into open, direct, and declared opposition, those who may be, in so far, promising well. Besides, if it be so that certain persons are very deficient in light and consistency, what do reason and Scripture prescribe as the likely way to gain them entirely over ? Not surely to disown them, and to attack them without discrimination, and without mercy ; but to deal kindly with them, to lay hold on whatever is right in their views, and to take whatever just principles they acknowledge in common with ourselves, as a groundwork for further calm discussion, and as the means of leading them on to renounce whatever is wrong, and to supply whatever is deficient in their views and conduct. In like manner, for the general prosperity of the Church, it is certainly of great importance that all good men, without giving up any thing they deliberately consider to be scriptural, or sacrificing their consistency, should unite in forwarding objects in which they are agreed.

I shall only add, that these truly enlightened and truly charitable and liberal views, should not be abused to that spurious liberality which is nothing but latitudinarianism, or indifference to all opinions and practices whatever. As to private persons, though saving grace is not tied down to any particular forms, it is not to be calculated on out of the visible Church, or when men are not walking according to scriptural order. And as to public teachers, though good may be done by some who have no regular outward call to the ministry, that does not justify needless irregularities in this way ; for none can now warrantably lay claim to any miraculous call. May the great Head of the Church greatly increase, throughout the world, the number both of preachers and of hearers who are really on his side : and may he also greatly increase their light, and zeal, and holiness. May the Churches have rest, and be edified, and, walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be multiplied.

LECTURE L.

LUKE IX. 51-56.

“ And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52. And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

As Luke is the only one of the four evangelists who relates this part of the sacred history, we have no direct assistance from any of the other three in settling its time, or other circumstances, more particularly. Commentators are generally agreed that it is here introduced by Luke, not in the order of time, but (as is often done in other cases, and as is also a very natural arrangement,) because of its similarity to what he had been relating immediately before. He had been telling how the apostles were for restraining a certain man from working miracles, because he did not move in their company; and now he introduces an account of the still greater extremity to which some of them were for proceeding against certain Samaritans. There are difficulties, however, and differences of opinion, as to the exact time here referred to. None can suppose that this took place during our Lord's last progress from Galilee to Jerusalem, after his resurrection, and immediately before his ascension: for then it could hardly have been introduced so near the beginning of the Gospel; besides, he did not present himself so publicly at that time, nor had he any sufferings or difficulties then to apprehend, which it required any courage to face. Though some are for referring this occurrence to his going up to the feast of Tabernacles mentioned in the 7th chapter of John, the circumstances of his performing that journey secretly after his brethren had gone up, of its not being his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem before his death, and of that feast being more than half a year before his death, are unfavourable to that opinion. That this was not his journey up just before the Passover at which he was crucified, is certain, for then he went from Ephraim, and passed through Jericho; so that his way did not lie through the country of Samaria, in which this occurrence took place.* Hence, it is probable that our Lord was now going up to the

* See John xi. 54; Luke xix. 1; and Doddridge's Note.

feast of the Dedication of the Temple, of which we read in John x. 22. Nor is the expression "*the time was come*," or the days being fulfilled, "that he should be received up," to be so rigidly interpreted as not to admit of the supposition of any interval at all; for similar modes of expression are used to signify, in general, that a time referred to was drawing near. Indeed, the circumstance of his not again returning to Galilee before his death, may, of itself, have been sufficient to justify this expression.

There seems no good reason to doubt that the first and most obvious idea which the other expression, being "*received up*," suggests, is the right one, namely, Christ's ascension, as the glorious termination of his sufferings and death. It is in this sense that the word is used, in the account of his ascension, in Mark xvi. 19: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The same word is used, in the same sense, thrice in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,* and also in the close of the noble climax in the 3d chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

There was an exact period fixed in the counsels of heaven, when Messiah was to die, and rise, and ascend. He knew that period well. He foresaw, too, all its circumstances, all its sorrows, and all its joys. Desirous to glorify his Father, to save sinners, and to receive the due reward of his humiliation, instead of shrinking back, or being afraid, he proceeded with resolution, and would not be dissuaded—he bent his course in a certain direction, and would not turn aside from it—"he stedfastly set," he confirmed, or fixed, "*his face to go to Jerusalem*." This reminds us of the mode of expression employed in the 50th chapter of Isaiah, in a passage prophetic of Christ, and descriptive of this very feature of his character: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."—"For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." So also, in describing how he had qualified Ezekiel for his office, the Lord said to him,† "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

Having adopted this resolution, Jesus did not take any circuitous course, in order to avoid the country of the Samaritans; but, as it lay directly in his way, he proceeded right through it, accompanied by the twelve, at least, if not by other disciples. Having to pass through "*a village of the Samaritans*" (what that

* Verses 2, 11, 22.

† Ezek. iii. 8.

village was we have no means of determining, nor would the knowledge of it be of any importance), "*he sent messengers before his face*"—he sent some of his attendants on before himself and the main body of his disciples, "*to make ready for him*"—to give notice of his approach, with a considerable number of his followers, that their coming might not excite surprise, or give offence, or be inconvenient—to secure their immediate admittance into the village—and to have some place prepared, where they might have suitable lodging and refreshment. This is usual and proper, when any numerous party are travelling together. Had this proposal been favourably entertained by the inhabitants, an extensive and acceptable opportunity of publishing to them the way of salvation would have been afforded, and the result might have been very happy. Thus, John the Baptist was Christ's messenger in a very emphatical sense, to prepare the way before him; and thus, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, Jesus sent the seventy, "*two and two before his face, into every city and place whither he himself would come.*"

But the inhabitants of the village "*did not receive him.*" They would not admit him into their village, or, at least, into any of their houses; they would not show him common hospitality; and of course they would not listen to his instructions—so completely did prejudice blind them to the duties of ordinary civility, and to their own best interests. Now, there is hardly anything of which men are guilty, which is so bad that no kind of a reason can be produced for it: these Samaritans, accordingly, had their reason, such as it was, for their conduct on this occasion. Their reason was, "*Because his face was as though he would go*"—his face was directed, he plainly appeared to be on his way—"to Jerusalem."

An antipathy of great strength, and of long standing, existed between the Jews and Samaritans. About fifty years after the revolt of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the city of Samaria was built by their king, Omri, on the hill of Shemar. This city became the capital of the kingdom of the ten tribes, or of Israel, as distinguished from Judah, and, in process of time, gave name to the surrounding country and its inhabitants. When Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, took Samaria, and carried away a great part of its inhabitants into captivity, he replaced them by Babylonians, and other idolaters, who, intermixed with the Israelites still remaining in the land, joined the worship of idols with the worship of the true God. This mixed race were called Samaritans. On the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and their beginning to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans, as we read in the 4th chapter of Ezra, wished to join them in the work, and to be admitted to religious fellowship with them. But, as they were a mixed race, and, though they might have, to a certain extent, honoured Jehovah, as they were far from being truly and

scripturally religious, and as it even appeared that, with all their professions of friendship, they would have, in reality, impeded the work, their offer was refused. On this, they, without disguise, set themselves to thwart the Jews in their pious undertaking. And when their efforts in this way proved ineffectual, they, some time after, built another for themselves on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans regarded only the five books of Moses, and paid no attention to the other inspired books of the Old Testament. Though they wished to be considered as the worshippers of Jehovah, their corruptions, both in theory and in practice, were very great; and they gave a most shameful proof of their impiety, when, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of the Jews, and the profaner of the true temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, they voluntarily dedicated their temple to Jupiter. On the whole, their worship was so schismatical and corrupt, that the Jews were right in looking on it as sinful and idolatrous, and in refusing to hold *religious* communion with them. The Jews, however, generally speaking, carried this feeling to an unreasonable and uncharitable length; and the Samaritans also, on their part, appear to have indulged an unrestrained dislike for the Jews. The woman of Samaria said to our Lord, at the well near Sychar, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" and it is added, "For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." This does not signify that the Jews would not deal with the Samaritans in the way of buying and selling; for they were accustomed to deal in that way with heathen nations. It means that they had no *friendly* intercourse* with them, no intercourse in the way, for example, of borrowing or lending, of bestowing or receiving any favour. The Lord Jesus disregarded all such traditionary customs, as they had no authority in Scripture or in reason, and were even subversive of common humanity. The inhabitants of this Samaritan village, however, following out their usual prejudice, refused to receive Christ and his apostles, their habitual prejudice being probably strengthened and irritated by the circumstance of these Jews being on their way to keep one of the feasts at the temple of Jerusalem, which was a plain condemnation of the schismatical, and partly idolatrous, worship at Samaria.

The conduct of these Samaritans in refusing to receive Christ and his disciples, was, indeed, very sinful; but the transport of rage into which that conduct threw his disciples, or at least some of his disciples, and the proposal which it provoked them to make, were most lamentable and most unchristian. That

* Οὐ συγγράμνται. The English version "have no dealings," is rather too strong. Neither Beza's translation, "non utunter," nor the Vulgate, "non co-utunter," brings out the exact meaning. Lightfoot produces several quotations to prove that the Jews had intercourse with the Samaritans and heathens, of a certain kind, but no friendly intercourse. Lexicographers, too, furnish ground for this interpretation of the word συγγράμναι, as they render it, not only "commercium habeo," but also, "una cum aliis utor, familiariter utor aliquo, mutuo accipio, utendum rogo."

John, especially, whose usual temper was so gentle and so affectionate, should have been so forward in this affair, is very strange, and ought to be considered as an instructive warning of the necessity for the most charitable and meek to be constantly on their guard against the first risings of prejudice, passion, and false zeal, lest the fierce spirit obtain the mastery over them.—“*And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*” There were here, without doubt, a conviction of the miraculous power which was ready to bear testimony to Christ, a zeal of a certain kind for his honour, a burst of indignation at the unworthy treatment shown to him, a submission to his will (“Wilt thou?”)—and a reference to scriptural example. But notwithstanding all these fair appearances, the proposal betrayed great blindness and rashness. Jesus had already been often rejected and insulted by Jews, but had never had recourse to any very severe measure against them, nor had his disciples ever proposed any: these Samaritans, though greatly to blame, were not so much to blame as those Jews who had enjoyed greater opportunities: there was, therefore, something very dreadful in the proposal to reduce this whole village to ashes, and to destroy its inhabitants, without distinction. As to the example they produced from the Old Testament in defence of their proposal, it was by no means applicable to the case in hand. The circumstances referred to are recorded in the 1st chapter of the Second Book of Kings, in the account given of what Elijah, as an instrument in the hand of the Lord, did to two different companies of men who were sent to seize him by Ahaziah, king of Israel. “The king sent unto Elijah a captain of fifty with his fifty: and he went up to him; (and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill;) and he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.” In the same manner, another captain and other fifty men, sent out for the same purpose, were consumed. There were, no doubt, some circumstances of similarity which might have suggested this tragical history to the minds of the two disciples at this time; yet, in other respects, the circumstances were so different that they ought to have entirely prevented the desire to see the repetition of such a catastrophe. As to Elijah, he was sent to testify against wilful and gross idolatry; his case was urgent, for his liberty and his life were immediately threatened; the dispensation under which he lived was a dispensation of comparative darkness and terror, with the genius of which such a vindication of the honour of Jehovah was quite congenial; and, moreover, he acted, we may be sure, by divine impulse. But when we consider the case of these Samaritans, bad as it was, we find

that they laboured under prejudices which, though they did not justify, certainly in some degree extenuated, the guilt of their conduct; that there was no such immediate danger to our Lord and his disciples as required any such summary and terrible remedy; that the proposal of the two disciples was, on the very face of it, altogether opposed to the mild genius of the gospel dispensation, and so far from originating in a divine command, was plainly the hasty suggestion of their own minds; and that if these villagers had been destroyed, they would have been considered as sacrificed to human resentment, and the rest of their countrymen would have been more prejudiced against the Saviour than ever. Besides, it must not be forgotten, that Almighty God, whether with or without the instrumentality of miraculously gifted men, may inflict judgments in his own just and supreme authority, which none of his creatures should presume to imitate, or to take into their own hands. How superior were the views of the apostles afterwards! and how much better the use they wished to be made of miraculous gifts when they prayed, "Now Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus!" *

But let us observe what reception the proposal of these two disciples met with from our Lord himself. "*He turned*"—he turned short round upon them, beholding them, no doubt, with an eye of authority and displeasure; and so he may be justly considered as still regarding all who entertain similar thoughts; "*and he rebuked them,*" as he may still be considered as rebuking all his erring people, in the disapproving declarations of his word, for he himself says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." He rebuked them, "*and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*" They were ignorant, nay, they were entirely mistaken, as to their spirit, their temper, or disposition. They imagined that they were influenced by a purely religious spirit—by a hatred of sin, and a regard to the honour of Christ: whereas, they were really led to make such a proposal by the original prejudice which, as Jews, they indulged against the Samaritans, and still more, by their now irritated pride, party feeling, blind zeal, personal resentment, violence, and passion. They were by no means aware how bad their spirit, in this case, was upon the whole, and in particular, how inconsistent it was with the great design of Christ's coming into the world. "*For,*" adds he in the last verse at present under consideration, "*the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*" Unquestionably, the express leading design of our Lord's coming was to save men's souls. "The Son of man," says he elsewhere, "is come to seek and to save that which is lost."—"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world,

* Acts iv. 29.

but that the world through him might be saved." And again, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." There is a close connexion, however, between the temporal life and the soul in this respect, that the destruction of the temporal life of sinners involves the loss of their souls: and indeed the destruction of these Samaritans by fire from heaven, would have been their everlasting destruction, at least in the opinion of the disciples. Besides, it is the tendency of the gospel to save the natural lives of men, by the justice, and mercy, and peace which it inculcates and cherishes. It embodies in its very nature, in every sense of the words, not only glory to God in the highest, but "on earth peace, and good-will towards men." It disowns every attempt to propagate it by violence or compulsion; and nothing could be more directly contrary to its whole spirit than the proposal now made. In all probability, our Lord had here also a reference to the nature of almost all his miracles. It is a common, just, and important remark, that they were almost all miracles of direct and obvious kindness and mercy, such as feeding the hungry, casting out devils, healing the sick, and raising the dead.—The proposal, then, being submitted to his consideration, he silenced those who made it, with this sharp rebuke: and without punishing, or resenting, in any way, the affront shown him by these people, he peaceably departed with his disciples, and he and "*they went*" forward "*to another village.*" So, when resistance to the truth is very obstinate and violent in any particular place, it may be proper, instead of further contending, to withdraw, at least for a season, and try whether men may not be found elsewhere more accessible to the light.

What now is the further and more full improvement which we ought to make of this passage?

1. *Let us admire, and in our sphere and measure, imitate, the noble firmness displayed by our Lord and Master on this occasion.* Going back, in imagination, to the time and the place here referred to, we see on the highway which leads from Galilee to Jerusalem—Jerusalem, that compact city whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord, and where are set the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David—we see many solitary pilgrims, and some groups of pilgrims, passing along to that sacred capital, that they may be present at the approaching feast, and offer sacrifices, and join in the various services of the temple. But behold one peculiarly interesting company of at least thirteen men, of whom one, who appears to be their chief, is leading the way, with that mildness of aspect and modesty of gait, which betoken meekness and lowliness of heart, and yet with that undauntedness of countenance and firmness of step which show him to be resolutely bent on some noble purpose. It is the Son of man, with his apostles, and he has

“stedfastly set his face” to go to Jerusalem, notwithstanding all the heavy sufferings, and the dreadful death which he knows are ere long to befall him there. Still more striking, however, than the expression in this passage, is this description, relating, probably, to a period still nearer the fatal hour: * “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.” How strikingly, too, was his resolution, nay, his desire, to go forward, expressed in the words, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” How worthy of admiration this courage, especially when viewed in connexion with the noble ends to which it led!

In this, however, there is not only much to be admired, but something to be imitated. As in his conduct in general, so in this part of it in particular, he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. “Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves likewise with the same mind.” Let us, in the strength of God, stedfastly set our face whithersoever duty calls, whether it be to danger or safety, to sufferings or privileges. Let us remember how Paul, that faithful servant of Christ, in his own place and measure, trod in the same steps, and left us a similar example. “And now, behold,” said he, “I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—“What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.”—Believers! whatever trials and sorrows may lie before us, let us, in Jesus’ name and strength, and in imitation of his example, stedfastly set our faces to go on: let us go on fearlessly, cheerfully. And, as our Redeemer was now looking forward to his death, so let us look forward to ours. Let us make up our mind to it; let us consider ourselves on the way to it; let us remember that every step we take brings us nearer to it: and let us not seek to avert our face from it, or to turn our back to it and fly from it; but let us stedfastly set our face towards it, and advance nearer and nearer to it, in the faith and hope of the Son of man, who not only died before us, as an example, but died for us as an atonement. Let us contemplate death under the pleasing idea of a being “received up,” remembering as to all who die in the Lord, that though their bodies may be laid in the grave, their souls pass immediately into glory. However melancholy this journey, which we are prose-

* Mark x. 32.

cuting, may appear to the eye of sense, it is thus mightily enlivened to the eye of faith; for, indeed, to set our face stedfastly, on Christian principles, towards death, is just to set our face stedfastly towards Jerusalem, even Jerusalem which is above. Let us press forward, then, to this mark, for the prize. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

2. *Let us beware of resembling these Samaritans in not receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.* Though they were not immediately destroyed, yet their sin was great; nay, the very circumstance of the merciful forbearance shown towards them, manifests, with peculiar clearness, the heaviness of the guilt they incurred by rejecting such goodness. This guilt, however, was by no means peculiar to the Samaritans: though it might have been supposed that the Saviour would have been cordially welcomed by all, he was generally rejected, even by the Jews. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And so, down to the present day, there are multitudes who professedly reject him, or who do not "receive" him in the saving sense of the term: and, as it was of old, so it is still, every person that refuses him has some excuse to allege, and some are prevented from receiving him by one prejudice, and some by another; but all their excuses and all their prejudices are as groundless and sinful as were those of the Samaritans. Now, we say to you, Beware of this. It is true that he has not sent messengers before him that you may make ready to receive him personally into your city and your dwellings: had he done this, I believe that, bad as we are, we should not all, like these Samaritans, have refused him admission, but that a goodly procession would have met him on his entrance, and welcomed his arrival, and that not a few would have contended for the honour and the pleasure of receiving him into their houses. But, though he is not thus seeking admission literally into your city, or into any of your dwellings, he is seeking admission spiritually into all your hearts: and here there need be no jealousy, no contest, no desire to monopolize his favour; for his gracious presence and blessing can fill all your hearts, and the more hearts are filled, the happier will each heart be. Yet, alas! how many hearts are shut against him! His messengers, one here, and another there, are this day calling on the inhabitants to prepare thus to receive him; and it is for you, in particular, to see to it that the call be not made to you in vain. It is by faith, remember, that he is to be received: "To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name."* Nay, not only are his messengers giving warning of his approach,

* John i. 12.

and calling on you to receive him, but he is himself actually arrived, in the spiritual sense, at your door, and ready to enter. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," says he; "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him." Who, then, that knows any thing of the honour, pleasure, and advantage, of having him for a guest, is not ready to cry, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

3. Let us observe how plainly *every kind and every degree of persecution are here forbidden*. The more violent kinds of persecution to which men have sometimes resorted, and especially persecution unto death, are, in one view, even worse than this proposal of the two disciples: for, as an excellent commentator * remarks, "It is one thing to appeal to God, and wait his decision, whether he will miraculously interpose, which was all that the apostles required; and another, and a widely different thing indeed, to take the cause out of his hands, and to execute vengeance on opposers by the arm of man, and according to his sentence, without any possibility of certainly knowing whether God does, or does not, approve of what we are doing: one thing to call for fire from heaven, and another to kindle fire on earth, to consume men, branded as heretics." Besides, where is the argument in favour of Christianity from any such human violence? and what can it possibly prove, except that those who employ it are acting a very unchristian part? Fire from heaven might prove a doctrine to be true; but fire kindled under any such pretence, by men, or any other species of persecution, could prove nothing but their own bigotry and cruelty. Indeed, such is the constitution of the human mind, that it is ready to call in question, or to suspect, even the truth itself, when any attempt is made to support it by such means.

It is not to be forgotten how often, and how violently, persecution has been employed to prop up falsehood, and to bear down true religion, and how ready persecutors have been to plead conscience and a regard to the glory of God. "I verily thought with myself," says the apostle of the Gentiles, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and, when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." He is described as, at one time, "breathing" out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Paul lived, however, to be deeply convinced of the guilt of his conduct, and to say, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." It is well known that persecution, by the sword, was the chief

* Scott.

means employed to establish Mohammedanism. Not to insist on the persecution of the Christians by the heathen governments—it is well known that persecution is made, in Scripture, one of the distinguishing features of the great apostasy which was to arise in the temple of God, or Christian church. It is foretold* that the image of the beast should “cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed:” and that “no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” We know where, when, by whom, and to what a dreadful extent, this prophecy was fulfilled. As Imperial Rome was unquestionably the seat of the beast, as an idolatrous and professedly heathen power; so Papal Rome is unquestionably the seat of the beast, as an idolatrous and professedly Christian power. As to the allegation, that persecution was also used on the side of the Protestants, the cases of persecution by them were very rare; they were the exception, and not the rule: and a short time, and a little more light, were sufficient to dissipate the mistake under which some of them laboured on this subject in consequence of the connexion they had formerly held with that great apostasy, the very genius, and rule, and habit, of which, were persecution.

Besides the more violent kinds of persecution, the less violent, such as calumny, sarcasm, and opprobrious names, are quite contrary to the spirit required by this passage. There are some who “whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect.” With regard to the treatment that truly pious persons have to expect, the rule is, that, in some form, and some measure, “all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:” and great is the guilt of those who persecute them. That, however, is not exactly the point now before us: for here we find men, who were, on the whole, good men, proposing to cut off persons who were unquestionably guilty of heresy and schism, in general, and who had just treated the Redeemer with marked indignity: and yet he rebuked these good men sharply for the proposal. Now, can any thing be more plainly and strongly conclusive against the employment of any kind of persecution, by any party whatever—the employment of any pains and penalties, any abusive treatment—even though the object be to maintain the unity of the Church, to secure purity of doctrine, and to reclaim heretics and schismatics, or prevent their increase? No doubt, the crimes which tend directly to the destruction of society, ought to be restrained by force: but the attempt to promote orthodoxy and positive spirituality, or even external uniformity in religious observances, by compulsion, ought to be altogether out of the question. Every such mode of procedure is directly contrary to Scripture. Our Lord said to Peter, when he had wounded the high priest’s

* Rev. xiii. 15.

servant because he presumed to lay hands on Jesus, "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" His prayer for his murderers was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Surely, when we behold those who have injured us, or those who are opposed to the truth, we should call for grace, and not for fire, to descend upon them from heaven.

It is altogether preposterous, also, to imagine that violence and harsh measures either have any tendency to promote, or do in fact promote, the cause of true religion. Be it so that some are in error and sin: is it possible to convert them in that way? Is not all true religion a reasonable service? and does it not imply the conviction of the understanding, and the consent of the will? Is it not what is true that is naturally adapted to convince the understanding, and what is amiable that is naturally adapted to win the heart? and is it not the exhibition of truth and grace in the gospel, which alone is effectual, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to overcome the natural dislike of the human heart to vital religion, and make men Christians? We must proceed with man according to the mental constitution which God has given him, if we are to make any good impression on him. As well might we "apply sounds to the eyes, in order to be seen, or colours to the ears, in order to be heard," as attempt to convince the understanding, or influence the will by force: "the absurdity in both cases is exactly the same."* Men's external actions may be forced, but not their hearts; and all that persecution can do is to make them hypocrites. Let us abstain, then, from all approaches to it. Let us seek to influence men aright, by scriptural arguments, gentleness, and good deeds; looking up, all the while, to Him who has the hearts of men in his hand, and praying Him to draw them with "the bands of a man"—with the bands which alone are suitable to man, even "the cords of love."

4. In all we do, and especially in what we do under the name of religion, *let us carefully consider what manner of spirit we are of.* There are some who seem to think that, provided there be some truth on their own side, and something wrong on the other, little caution is required as to the keenness they display, and the means of attack they employ; and hence, though they evidently become a prey to prejudice and passion, and get so excited as to be incapable of forming a deliberate and impartial judgment of several of the points in dispute, and set no bounds to their violence, they pretend to despise the remark, that they are proceeding in a very bad spirit. But how can any Christian consistently disregard this, or object to the caution, when Jesus Christ himself here virtually calls to us all to consider and know what manner of spirit we are of? It is not enough that

* Dr. S. Clarke.

our zeal in attacking error have some real error in view: we must also take heed to the manner in which our zeal works, both internally and outwardly. There is a furious zeal which leads a man to cry, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts," which has no regard to moderation in degree, or propriety in manner, and which is quite reckless of consequences. That was a bad spirit which led Moses repeatedly to strike the rock, and to cry out, in a passion, "Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" A bad spirit is plainly at work when men manifest such symptoms as the following—when, despairing of carrying their point by calm argument, they have recourse to passionate invective and clamour—when they misconstrue the motives, and words, and actions of those whom they are opposing—when they lay hold, with eagerness and satisfaction, on what is doubtful, to twist it to what is plainly to be condemned, exaggerating faults, and omitting, or undervaluing excellencies—when they slyly, but falsely, insinuate that they know more than they choose to express—when they sacrifice the common maxims of friendship and the common courtesies of life at the shrine of violence—and when they bring themselves into a situation in which they are tempted to rejoice in iniquity, and not in the truth. It is quite in vain for men, when they are going on in this way, to plead that they are engaged in a good cause: the fact is, that in the great majority of cases, truth is found on the opposite side from such procedure; and even when men have the right side of the question, it is disgraced by such violence. It often happens that those who are proceeding in this way, when they think they are acting a very faithful and very noble part, and doing much good, are acting very foolishly, and doing much mischief. If they seem to succeed, by such means, for a time, the tide soon turns, and what seems to be gained, is lost. Let us not have "bitter envying and strife in our hearts." "Let us not render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." Michael, the archangel, when disputing even with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation; and that should be a lesson to us, even in the most provoking cases, and in dealing with the most inveterate enemies of religion. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men," "patient;" "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Alas! many good people are often under the influence of a bad spirit, and know it not. Let us all watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.

Lastly. *Let us be very thankful when we think of the gracious purpose for which the Son of God is here said to have come into the world.* His gospel has already saved the temporal life of many; and if wars, and fightings, and persecutions, have arisen, they have arisen, not from the gospel, but in defiance of it. The time is coming, too, when his gracious purpose, in this respect,

shall be completely accomplished. When Christ's reign is universal, the reign of violence will be everywhere unknown. Men shall then beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and not learn the art of war any more. "They shall not hurt nor destroy, in all God's holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But especially ought we to be thankful that the Son of God came, not to destroy, but to save in the spiritual sense. He came, not as a messenger of vengeance, as our guilty fears might have apprehended, but as the Prince of peace, and the God of salvation. Yes; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Let us fall in with his gracious design, by receiving the gospel for ourselves, and may he hasten the time when his salvation shall reach to the most distant lands, and when men shall be blessed in him, and all nations call him blessed. Amen.

LECTURE LI.

LUKE IX. 57-63.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

WE have here an account of the way in which three different persons acted in reference to the one duty of following Christ; and we shall examine their cases in the order in which the evangelist introduces them, and endeavour to carry along with us the practical instruction which each of them respectively suggests. It is not certain that they all occurred on one occasion, and it is clear that they are not introduced, or at least the two first of them are not introduced, by Luke in the order of time. He had been just giving an account of Jesus' going up to Jerusalem; and now he says, in the first verse of the passage under consideration, “*And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way;*” but he does not expressly say that it was in the way to Jerusalem: and, when we compare the parallel passage in Matthew, 8th chapter from the 18th verse, we find it written, as introductory to the account of two cases which are so similar to the two first here before us, that they cannot be reasonably supposed to have occurred twice: “Now, when Jesus saw great multitudes, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side;” that is, to cross over the lake of Gennesaret to the country of the Gergesenes; and the cases in question are represented as having happened before he entered into the ship, and, of course, happened when he was on the way to the sea-shore, accompanied by his regular disciples, and others who were occasional hearers. Though multitudes were waiting to hear him where he was, yet others, in other places, needed instruction as well as they; besides, his removal to some distance, would serve to try the sincerity of those who appeared to be so earnest to hear him, for if they did really value his ministry as they ought, they would not grudge the trouble of following it when it was withdrawn from their immediate neighbourhood. Observe here, that while there are some who are negligent of the ordinances of God's house, though they live almost at its very gate, and

have every facility of attendance, there are many who are so remiss that a very moderate distance, or a very slight difficulty, is reckoned an insurmountable obstacle, and a sufficient excuse for general, or, at least, frequent absence : and hence learn that, however you may be situated, nothing but necessity should prevent you from waiting regularly on the public worship of God, and the preaching of his word.

Jesus Christ, being about to leave that part of the country and cross the sea of Galilee, "*A certain man,*" (according to Luke) "*said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*" Matthew tells us that this man was a "scribe,"—that is, literally, a writer ; and as writing, and especially writing with expertness, was, at one time, but a rare qualification among the people, the name signified a man of learning in general, and a scribe was a doctor, or teacher and interpreter of the law. For the most part, we find the scribes, along with the Pharisees, openly opposed to Christ ; but here we find a scribe promising well, addressing Jesus as Lord, or Master, and declaring that he would continue to wait on him. He had been an occasional hearer, and now had obtained a certain conviction, though probably a vague conviction, of the dignity of Jesus, and the excellencies of his discourses, and was under such a temporary impression, as prompted him to make this declaration ; and you observe that it was of his own accord, determined, and unlimited. The resolution was good as to its letter, but very deficient as to its spirit. In all probability, he imagined that Jesus was to assume a temporal kingdom, and expected that he would gladly accept of such an offer from a learned and influential scribe, and would exalt him to a high and profitable station : and it is plain that the resolution was adopted and expressed without due consideration—indeed, with excessive rashness, and self-confidence.

Our Lord, who knew what was in man, saw well the state of this scribe's mind, and how he needed to be dealt with, in order to bring him to sober consideration. Instead of praising his zeal, and urging him forward, he suggests to him matter of deep and serious reflection ; instead of a flattering view of the advantages, he gives him a faithful representation of the difficulties, which lay before him ; instead of keeping his eye fixed on the bright side of the cloud, he bids him look also at the dark. "*He said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*" "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests : " even the wildest animals have their places of resort. There are holes for foxes and other burrowing animals, and there are nests for the fowls of heaven ; and the God of nature and providence gives food to them all. "The conies," saith Solomon, "are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks."—"The trees of the Lord are full of sap," says the Psalmist, "the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted ; where the birds

make their nests: as for the stork, the fir-trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies."—"These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season."—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young." But, as for Jesus Christ, "he had not where to lay his head:" he had no fixed place of abode, no house he could call his own, no certain spot on which, when worn out with the toils of the day, he could lay himself down to rest at night. You readily perceive how suitably this statement was placed before the mind of the scribe. It was directly calculated to dissipate his dream of earthly ease, prosperity, and grandeur; for, when such was the condition of Christ himself, the worldly exaltation of his followers was quite out of the question. And this statement was directly calculated to try the stability of the scribe's resolution, and to convince him that Christ's genuine disciples were then to be proved and known, not by bold asseverations and hasty promises, made during the sudden flush of feeling, but by continuing to follow him stedfastly, notwithstanding all the trials to which they might be exposed on this account. We are not told what was the result of this case, but it is the general opinion, and it is probable, that this saying proved enough to detect the self-confidence, and to cool the false zeal, of the scribe, and to cause him to withdraw and to speak no more of following Jesus.

Now, what is the instruction we should derive from this first case? We learn from it, in common with the two following cases, that it is our bounden duty to follow Christ, and to follow him whithersoever he goeth. We have this description of the redeemed in the Revelation: * "These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Literally, to follow Jesus, as those who attended him while he was on the earth, is what we cannot do; but to follow him in the spiritual sense, as believing in his name, imitating his example, and obeying his commandments, is what we may do, and must do, if we are to be saved, and was what alone availed to the salvation of his immediate disciples. The resolution of this scribe was, as we have said, excellent in itself.

But, while we are reminded, in all the cases, of the necessity of thus following Christ, we are here instructively reminded that there are some who, like this scribe, are forward to make keen and unreserved, and, perhaps, for the time, sincere professions of their resolution to follow Jesus, and yet do not ultimately prove steady. They are ready to say, with the Israelites, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," without ever suspecting their own weakness, and without being properly aware of the difficulties of a truly Christian faith and practice. Like the thorny-ground hearers, they hear the word, and anon with joy receive it; but having no root of grace in them, they

* Rev. xiv. 4.

are soon offended. Now, we should be aware of this, lest we ourselves fail, after the same fickle example. Jesus Christ does not wish to deceive us—he does not wish to entrap us, so to speak, into a religious profession, by lax views of doctrine, or practice, or by prospects of worldly aggrandizement; but he propounds doctrines that strike at the root of all spiritual pride and all worldliness, and he requires, at all hazards, an entire and perpetual surrender of the whole man to his service. When we are to take up the profession of Christianity, he would have us, according to his own very significant expression, “to count the cost.” The meaning is, not that there is any thing so painful and formidable in a life of faith in the Son of God as should deter us from entering on it—on the contrary, to those who set themselves to the duty in a right way, his “yoke is easy and his burden is light;” but still, there is a burden, there is a yoke to be borne, there is a real labour, a struggle to be undergone; and if we profess ourselves resolved to be Christians, without being aware of this, we shall be totally unprepared for the contest, and shall fail in the time of trial. We should think well, then, of what a real Christian life is; and we should enter on it, though not with a spirit of bondage, yet with due consideration, with a proper sense of our own weakness, and with a firm dependence on divine grace to keep us steady.

And even though we have already begun to follow Christ in earnest, the spirit of this case and of other passages of Scripture, is not favourable to our making positive, spontaneous, and uncalled-for asseverations of what we shall be or do. As the scribe fell short, it is to be feared, of his profession, so have many others. So, for example, did Peter, who said to Jesus, “I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death”—“Lord why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake:” but we know what was the result, and how he denied Christ with oaths. If we shall at any time be clearly called on by Providence—if the glory of God and the good of men shall require it—if, like Paul, we shall be “compelled to glory”—let us speak out boldly, let us witness a good confession in words, and let us, in humble confidence in God’s strength, tell to their face those who would terrify or entice us away from Christ, that we are resolved to hold fast his name, and to let no man take our crown; but in general, let us be contented with showing our faith by our works, and with seeking to convince men of our stability by actually persevering.

And, how affecting and instructive is the description which the Redeemer here gives of his lowly, poor, and persecuted state! So poor was he that some of his followers “ministered unto him of their substance” while he lived; and when he died, he was buried at the expense of a pious and charitable stranger. He was, throughout, destitute, not only of the conveniences and comforts, but of what are considered the necessaries of life.

He was born in a stable, and laid in a manger—despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—without a home of his own, and driven by relentless persecutors from place to place, and thus prevented from enjoying the pillow of rest which his few attached disciples might have furnished: while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, he had not where to lay his head. And who is this? and why is it thus with him? This is the Son of Mary—the Messiah—the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God—the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, who was infinitely exalted and happy before the world was; but who, though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, thus humbled himself, and took on him the form of a servant. Never was such a contrast heard of; nor could it have been conceived of, had it not been exhibited. And why was it thus with him? Why but for us, my friends, for us poor, sinful, and perishing creatures, and for our salvation? “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.” How ought we to admire and adore him for this condescending love! Should not this also operate powerfully in inducing us all to open our hearts to receive him as our Saviour? When we think of him as not having where to lay his head, may he not be considered as saying to each of us, “Open unto me, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night?”

There is here a striking demonstration, too, of the vanity of the world. Doubtless, men should be thankful for whatever worldly prosperity God sends; but, if wealth and a fine house be the all of life, or the most desirable of portions, why was it that the Son of man had not where to lay his head? This touching description should also support the minds of all Christ's followers, and prevent them both from distrusting Providence, and from murmuring under poverty, or any trouble, if it shall come upon them. Looking at what is said of these wild animals—if the Lord care for the foxes and the birds, will he not care for his own people, and find them (however mean) a dwelling-place and food? Are they not of more value than many sparrows? “Behold the fowls of the air,” said Jesus, “for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” And, looking at what is here said of Jesus—if even very griping poverty should be their lot, should they not be comforted under it? should they not be reconciled to it? nay, should it not be sanctified, and sweetened, and blessed to them, by the remembrance of their beloved Master's destitution? “Even unto this present hour,” said Paul, and he said it with composure and joy, “we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place.”—“The *disciple* is not above his master,” said Jesus, “nor the servant

above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord."

We shall only further remark, on this case, that though it is to be feared the scribe withdrew, there is nothing in this declaration of our Lord's which ought to discourage us from following him, but there is much which should have the opposite effect. There is, indeed, nothing to attract, but much to repel the earthly mind, in our Lord's humiliation; but it may be questioned whether to the eye of the renewed and believing soul he ever appears so lovely, glorious, and winning, as when viewed in that light. Shall we not love him who so loved us? Surely we ought. Shall we forsake him because of what he submitted to on our account? Such folly and base ingratitude be far from us! Let the thought of what he has done and suffered for us, sweetly constrain us to do and suffer everything for him; and surely, if we feel at all aright, we shall feel that *that* everything, as we call it, is nothing in comparison of the debt of gratitude we owe him. Nor is it possible, however great the deprivations to which any may be subjected by following him, that they shall be losers at last. Should they be thrust out from every resting-place, and from the earth itself, by slow persecution, or a violent death, they shall have a mansion in heaven. Let us, then, believingly and practically follow the Saviour whithersoever he goeth, and whithersoever he would lead us.

Verse 59: "*And he said unto another, Follow me.*" Our Lord enjoined this man, who had hitherto been only an occasional attendant on him, now to accompany him statedly, in order that he might be fully instructed in the gospel, and trained up for its ministry. You will observe that this case differs from the preceding in that this man did not, like the first, spontaneously declare that he would follow Christ, but waited till he was called to follow him. The other man was too hasty; this man was too slow to obey where the call was clear. He ought to have obeyed the call implicitly and immediately: but what was his reply? "*He said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*" He does not absolutely refuse compliance; nay, he says as much as if he were resolved to comply at last: but he requests to be allowed to remain at home till he had buried his father. Some think that his father was not actually dead, but only in advanced age and in much infirmity, and that the son wished to be allowed to stay with him, as long as he lived, for a comfort to him, and promised that after his father's death and burial, he would then accompany Christ. If this was the state of things, the proposal for delay was a proposal to defer till an indefinite, and, perhaps, long period; which, of course, though it had some appearance of good, was very improper. But most probably his father was actually dead; yet, even in this view, though it might at first seem that the proposal was reasonable, and was indeed very natural, it was not right, as will soon appear.

Our Lord would not listen to the plea of delay, but repeated

his call in these words, "*Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*" "Let the dead bury their dead." This striking proverbial expression could never have been uttered by our Lord with the view of discouraging natural affection, or any becoming attention to parents, or other relations, either alive or dead. He himself exhibited a beautiful pattern of filial affection, and reproved the scribes and Pharisees for leading men to transgress the fifth commandment by their traditions: and his inspired apostle exhorts children "to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God." All harsh interpretations, and indiscriminating applications of these words are, therefore, to be carefully avoided. Still they bear a strong and important meaning. If by the dead, in the first part of the sentence, we understand the literally dead, then the meaning is, that though there were none but dead persons left behind (a most unlikely case), it were better to leave the dead unburied, than to refuse to follow Christ. But the word, in its first use, is rather to be understood of the figuratively, or spiritually, dead, for so those who are in their natural and unrenewed state are frequently called in Scripture: thus we read, "He was dead and is alive again;" "Dead in trespasses and sins;" and, "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." The import, in this view, is, that this man was told to leave the burying of his father to those who were in a careless and unconverted state, rather than disobey the call to follow Christ and to preach the gospel.

Now, while there may have been very peculiar circumstances, altogether unknown to us, in this case, which rendered the authoritative and seemingly severe command of Christ most proper and gracious, there are some things obvious, and others very probable, which lead to the same conclusion. The reason of the call, for example, was very urgent. This will not be disputed when the importance, not merely of this man's soul, but of the general cause of the gospel of peace, is considered; there was, indeed, an urgency which justified and required a departure from ordinary rules. This man was called to prepare for soon preaching the gospel, and this was not only very important in itself, but required him to be free from ceremonial uncleanness. Our Lord may have had some reference, in thus prohibiting him from attending the funeral, to the idea of ceremonial pollution by the dead, and certain legal appointments regarding priests and Nazarites. "He that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; neither shall he go into any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his other." *—"All the days that he (the Nazarite) separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for

* Lev. xxi. 10; Numb. vi. 6.

his brother, or for his sister, when they die; because the consecration of his God is upon his head." In all cases, such coming at the dead contracted ceremonial defilement, and rendered it necessary to submit to a course of legal purification for a considerable time; and therefore, if this man had been allowed to remain for any such purpose, he would have been longer detained than might at first sight appear, and than was consistent with the urgency of the case, for he could not have gone along with Christ that day. Our Lord might also have been aware that if he had permitted him to stay behind, there would have been a danger of his being detained altogether; and thus may have arisen another wise and gracious reason for this peremptory injunction. But, though we could not see, or conjecture, so much as all this, we must acknowledge that the express command of the Lord superseded the obligation of all ordinary rules; and that it would have been better, if nothing else could be, that a man should remain unburied, than that the Lord should be disobeyed in any degree, or for the shortest period.

With regard to the result of this case, as every other express and personal call of which we read was obeyed, so we must conclude that Christ's calling of this man was accompanied with the inward energy of his grace to render it effectual.

What now is the instruction we should derive from this second case? We can suppose a case in which it would plainly be duty to be guided by this passage in the literal sense, and to go away, or to remain away, even from the funeral of one's father. This would be justified, for example, by a case of very urgent necessity, or mercy, with regard to the living. Or, we shall have a case still more similar to the one before us, if we suppose a missionary who has had a clear call to the work, and who is ready to set out in a ship, which is destined for the country where he is to labour, and which is just about to set sail: the trial may be severe, but it is clear that neither the dangerous illness, nor the death, of any of his dearest relations, should keep him back, so as to make him lose his passage, and to frustrate the noble work to which he is called. But, passing from any further consideration of this case, in so close and literal a view, and looking at it in a more enlarged sense, the general principle it embodies is this, that, taking care not to overstrain the point to the neglect of the relative duties which we really owe, nothing connected with our friends should prevent any of us from following Christ in the spiritual and saving sense. It cannot be questioned that men's salvation is often hindered by their pretended regard to their friends, when that is a mere fictitious apology for the disinclination of their own hearts. But granting that their regard for their parents and friends is sincere and deep, it ought not to be forgotten that the preference is still due to their Creator and Redeemer. Now, apply this to the subject before us. Though the direct tendency of the gospel is to make men of one mind, and peaceful, and happy, yet it often indirectly becomes the in-

nocent occasion of differences between friends, when some of them are converted, and others remain careless and ungodly, and when the blame lies with the latter. Then it requires, at once, much meekness, as well as much courage, to act a right part; but those who would be Christ's disciples must not fail to cleave to him at all events. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth," says he; "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." * And again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple:"—"hate not," that is, comparatively with Christ—love them not less than he loves Him, and positively refuse to be influenced by them, when they come into competition with Him, and would keep him from following Jesus. The spirit which animated Levi to come out from his relations, so far as was necessary for the service of God, and which is so much commended, is worthy of universal adoption, "He said unto his father and mother, I have not seen them; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children."† The call, too, which God addresses, by the Psalmist, to the Church, must be obeyed by all who would be saved, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."‡ I hope in God there are very few of you who are yourselves much tried, or who are trying others, in the painful way to which we are referring: it is probable enough, however, that there are some of you who are connected with those who seek to keep you from forsaking the world and following Christ; and also some of you whose example, and even more direct endeavours, are calculated to detain some of your connexions in the same state of spiritual deadness with yourselves. If there be, we would say to the latter, "Woe unto you!"—"for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Cease thus to fight against God; and, instead of opposing, begin to encourage and to imitate those of your family and friends who are "asking the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward." And we would say to the former, Give no unnecessary offence to your unbelieving friends, nay, do every thing you can, consistently with duty, to disarm their prejudice, and to reconcile them to your views; but beware of being yourselves ruined, or

* Matt. x. 34; Luke xiv. 26.

† Deut. xxxiii. 9.

‡ Ps. xlv. 10.

injured, by a regard, an undue regard, to the wishes of unconverted relations. Leave these worldly persons to follow their worldly pursuits, if more you cannot make of it at present; "let the dead bury their dead," but follow you Christ. Nor will this be to desert your duty to them, or to act unkindly to them, but quite the reverse; instead of an interference between a proper regard to yourselves and love and duty to them, there is the most perfect harmony; for, faithfulness on your part is the only way in which you can ever hope to be useful to them.

In closing our remarks on this case, we observe, with that excellent practical commentator, Henry, from the circumstance of this second case turning out so well, while the first entirely failed, that "we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promises to him."—"Ye have not chosen me," saith Jesus, "but I have chosen you."—"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."—"He calleth whom he will." May he draw us, and we shall run after him!

Let us now consider the third case, as it is given in the last two verses of the chapter. Matthew relates the two first cases, but it is only in Luke that we find this last. It, perhaps, occurred at a different time from the two preceding; but its close resemblance to them rendered its introduction here very natural. "*And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.*" Though it is not expressly stated, I think it may be gathered from the strain of this passage, that in this case, as in the case immediately preceding, what was said was in reply to an express call of our Lord, and not, as in the first case, a spontaneous declaration. And there seems reason to believe that, though this man wished to shift the call for a time, he found himself constrained forthwith to comply. He did not give a positive refusal; nay, he declared he would follow Christ, and only requested permission, as it is here expressed, to "go bid them farewell who were at home in his house." No doubt, the common idea of bidding farewell is included in the passage as it is in the original, but there is more included in it, for it implies setting the things in order at his house, that having done so, and given proper directions about everything, he might then leave both the things and the people of his house.*

Though this request discovered a deficiency of zeal, devotedness, and readiness of obedience, Jesus, might, perhaps, have granted it, if it could have been granted with safety to the man himself, and justice to the cause of God. Thus, a similar request, in very similar circumstances, was granted to Elisha (as we read in 1 Kings xix. 19), to which there may have been an allusion on the part both of this man and of our Lord. "So he (Elijah) departed thence, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat,

* See the use of the Greek word ἀποχαιρετάς in Mark vi. 46; Luke xiv. 33; Acts xviii. 18, 21, and 2 Cor. ii. 13.

who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again; for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat; then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." In Elisha, however, as his very prompt and decisive conduct immediately proved, there was that determination of mind which rendered it safe for him to go and take leave of his friends; whereas, in this man, our Lord, we may believe, perceived a wavering and a desire to gain time, which would have rendered it very dangerous for him to be exposed to the temptations which a sight of his property and a meeting with his friends would have presented. The sight of his goods and his comfortable home might have tempted him to desert from Christ altogether, like Demas, of whom Paul said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Or, if he was not a covetous man, natural affection might have overcome him, when his family and friends began to beseech him not to leave them. Such hesitation and delay, moreover, where the duty to which he was now called was so important, and the command so positive, were not to be encouraged, but checked. Our Lord, accordingly, refused his request, in these words:

"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This comparison, drawn from an important operation in husbandry, is very intelligible and expressive, when taken in the literal sense. How useless would be the ploughman's engaging in his work, if he desisted when he had made a single furrow! And what bad work would he make, if, while he continued to hold the plough, instead of looking right before him, he turned his eye backward! He could neither preserve the straightness nor the proper depth of the furrow; he would mar the field; and he would be justly reckoned so unfit for his work, that no husbandman would employ him. Hesiod, one of the oldest uninspired writers, gives this description of a good ploughman, that he is one who, "attending to his business, draws the furrows straight, by no means looking round about on his companions, but keeping his mind fixed on his work."* The figurative application of this comparison is also obvious. The individual in question would have been quite unfit for the difficult work of preaching the gospel, and, indeed, for the personal enjoyment of the blessings, and discharge of the duties of the gospel, if he had either actu-

* "Ὁς κ' ἔργου μελετῶν ἰθείην αὐλάκ' ἱλαύνει,
Μηκίτι παπταίνων μισθ' ἀμύληπας, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἔργῳ
Θυμὸν ἵχων. *Opera et Dies*, ii. 61.

ally gone away from Christ at this time, or even continued inwardly to cherish the desire of departing, implied in the expression, "looking back." And so it holds true universally that whoever either openly apostatizes from Christ, by returning to the world, or secretly hankers after the world in his heart, is unfit for the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven—neither is a true Christian here, nor will be acknowledged as such hereafter.

And now, like the two preceding cases, this case also is full of instruction. There is a peculiar reference here, as in the whole of this passage, to ministers—to those who are called to preach the word. If they are to be useful, faithful, and accepted of their Master, they must, at the outset, take leave of the world, in the sense of its being their chosen portion, and necessary to their happiness; and they must hold themselves in readiness to go whithersoever the Head of the Church may call them. The apostle Paul, in teaching Timothy to hold himself disencumbered, has these words: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." They should also study to preserve a similar spirit throughout. And, as they should not get so involved in worldly business of their own, so neither should any desire to see them so much engaged in the merely secular, however charitable, affairs of others, as may, in any hurtful degree, withdraw them from their proper spiritual employment. When a murmuring arose that the Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministration of charity, the twelve said,* in words very instructive in all ages of the Church, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

This case, however, is applicable to all, and it should be felt by all of you as pressing on you the necessity of an immediate and unhesitating compliance with Christ's command to follow him as your Saviour and Master. There are, probably, none of you who are prepared to give a direct and positive refusal for ever; but there are certainly many of you who are postponing compliance, on various pretences. Say not that you have not time to attend to your salvation at present, and that you must first get your temporal affairs in order, "but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and all needful things will be added unto you. If you have never yet begun to follow Christ, begin now. If you think that you are willing and resolved to follow him, see that you actually do so. If you think you are beginning to follow him, break thoroughly away from sin and the world, and see that in a short time your progress be so considerable that it may be manifest you are on the way to heaven. Beware of whatsoever, and of whomsoever, might be the means

* Acts vi. 1-4.

of arresting you at the outset. Parley not with the tempter, and keep far away from all that would enchain you to the earth. Of all excuses for not immediately and heartily yielding, of all arguments for at least a little delay, none is more plausible, or more dangerous, than that of consulting friends. There are, indeed, many things in which it is wise to ask and to follow the opinion of others; but as to whether you ought to believe and obey the gospel, whether you ought to seek the one thing needful, and to choose the good part which shall never be taken from you—as to whether you ought (as it is here expressed) to follow Christ, there ought to be no question about this: the propriety and necessity of this are beyond dispute—there is not the least occasion to ask advice of any one as to this: and if you can now, where you sit, coolly think of declining to close with the gospel call till you go home and consult your friends, you are either yet very far from the kingdom of God, or you are labouring under a most dangerous mistake, which the case before you should rectify. Suppose, however, you have this moment resolved to put off Christ till you advise with your friends, and get their consent: they are either followers of Christ themselves, or they are not. But, in either case, it is quite needless to wait for, or ask their opinion; for I can save you the trouble and the time of asking, by telling you at once, and without a doubt, what the substance of their opinion will be. If they are not following Christ themselves, they will, in some way, either plainly or by implication, dissuade *you* from following him; and so, if you are to consult them, and be influenced by them, you may just as well flatly and bluntly refuse Christ at once, and say to him, each of you, “No, I will not follow thee.” But if, on the contrary, your friends are enlightened, believing, and godly persons themselves, if they are indeed following Jesus Christ whithersoever he goeth; then you yourselves know quite well what advice they would give you, and you need not wait to ask, nor need I say a word about it. They have given it you already habitually in their example, and perhaps with entreaties, and prayers, and tears. I say, then, if you wish to do what of all conceivable things would most rejoice their hearts, just comply with this invitation immediately, and let them forthwith and ever after this see that you are following Christ. In a word, why should the persons, or things, of your house at home, or of the world at large, cause you another moment’s delay? What was spoken in reference to different, though similar subjects, may be applied here, in this the day of your lingering and dangerous yet hopeful crisis: “In that day, he who shall be upon the house top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife.” Remember how, when looking back with lingering regret to Sodom, she was turned into a pillar of salt, an everlasting monument of God’s displeasure. “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee,

neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Finally: Let those of you who are following Christ, that is, living in the faith and obedience of the gospel, be admonished, by this case, of the necessity of being steady and faithful to the last. One furrow is nothing, so you must persevere in this spiritual work. No part of your Christian business can be properly discharged, if your attention be directed elsewhere. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways:" keep, therefore, your eye ever on your work, and pursue it with a simplicity of aim. Let not your friends hinder you. "Confer not with flesh and blood," as if there were any doubt whether you ought to lead a consistent life. Be like Paul, who said, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." Beware of secret declensions. Beware even of looking back. Look right before you. Press forward in the strength of God. Follow on to the end; and "verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed Christ in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him. Be ye not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

LECTURE LII.

LUKE X. 1-20.

“After these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come. 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few : pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3. Go your ways : behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes ; and salute no man by the way. 5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it : if not, it shall turn to you again. 7. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give : for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you : 9. And heal the sick that are therein ; and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you : notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. 13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! woe unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. 17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

LUKE is the only evangelist who gives us an account of this very important branch of the Gospel history, the appointment, mission, and success of the seventy. “*After these things,*” says he, “*the Lord,*” (for so he styles Jesus in a way expressive of his divinity,) “*the Lord appointed other seventy also ;*” that is, in addition to the twelve. In fixing the exact number of the apostles, Christ seems to have had regard to the number of the tribes of Israel ; and so in fixing the exact number of this additional set of labourers, he seems to have had regard to the number of the elders of Israel. The number seventy is, indeed, a remarkable number in Scripture.* The number of Jacob’s

* Exod. i. 5, xv. 27, xxiv. 1 ; Numb. xi. 16. The number now sent out by Christ was, unquestionably, exactly seventy. The number seventy-two, in the Vulgate, is an unjustifiable departure from the Greek, and a manifest corruption. Some writers speak of the sanhedrim, or chief council of the Jews, having consisted of seventy-two, or six from each tribe ; but there is no sufficient foundation for that opinion. If, indeed, Moses

family who came down into Egypt was seventy. At Elim there were "twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees." Seventy of the elders of Israel were taken up into the mount with Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, to see the glory of God. Seventy elders were afterwards chosen to assist Moses in governing; and the Spirit which was upon him was given to them, and they prophesied. The Jewish sanhedrim, or chief council, afterwards consisted of seventy. And now, our Lord ordains and commissions seventy persons, besides the apostles, to go and preach the gospel, and to prepare the way for him in those cities which he was to visit. From this it appears that, by this time, the cause of Christ was growing, and that the number of his followers was considerable. The names of the seventy are not given, but it is probable that many who are afterwards mentioned as the friends and companions of the apostles were of the number.

You will observe that the instructions given to the seventy are, in most particulars, the same with those given to the twelve in the beginning of the preceding chapter and the parallel passages of the other evangelists. The instructions are the same with regard to their proceeding two and two—their making no extraordinary provision for the journey, which was to be short—their just title to be supported in the work—the indifference they should show to all self-indulgence—the prudent way they should conduct themselves when they entered into any city and house—the subject of their preaching, namely, the kingdom of God—the miracles of healing they were to work in proof of their divine mission—and finally, how they were to wipe off the dust of their feet as a testimony against those who would not receive them. The former account was also introduced by a similar statement of the fewness of labourers, and of an injunction to the disciples to pray that the Lord of the spiritual harvest would thrust forth more. Having so lately considered these particulars, we shall now pass them over entirely, or almost, without remark, and shall only consider the circumstances which did not come before us then.

"Behold," said Jesus, verse 3, "*I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*" Even in this first journey, still more in their subsequent labours, they were to be exposed to the subtlety and cruelty of men, whom he compared to wolves, and whom they could not resist by force: and therefore, if he stated as fully to them the way in which they should carry themselves as he did to the twelve,* he told them to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," and added other considerations of a comforting and encouraging nature. The trying situation of the seventy, here so briefly, yet so emphatically described, has often been that of other preachers, and of private followers of

be counted as presiding over the seventy elders, and if the president of the sanhedrim in later times be counted, the number would be seventy-one.

* Matt. x. 16.

the Lord; and they are here reminded that though, in some situations, they may do well to avail themselves of other means of defence, particularly the protection of the law, yet in most cases, their best means of safety, under God, are their own prudence and gentleness. Are any of you who desire to be faithful to Christ, in any way beset and harassed on that account? cautiously avoid whatever would needlessly irritate your troublers, and furnish them with a handle against you; and, at the same time, bear their unkind treatment with all meekness, and cease not to conduct yourselves in a friendly and conciliating manner towards them. In this way, you will probably disarm their hostility at last, and you will, at all events, retain your own peace of mind, and the approbation of your blessed Master.

“*Salute no man by the way,*” said our Lord to the seventy. Neither this, nor any other part of Scripture, can be justly considered as discountenancing the ordinary tokens of civility between man and man. There may be some Pharisees who vainly “love salutations in the market-places,” but that is no reason why Christians should not be courteous, or why they should affect needless singularity of manners. Our Lord here intended, by the prohibition, not to do away salutations in general, but to impress on the minds of the seventy the expedition with which they should proceed to accomplish their important mission. Thus, when Elisha sent away his servant, Gehazi, to Shunem, in haste, he said to him,* “Go thy way; if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again.” It is to be remembered that salutations, in the East, were not made by a slight gesture, or a word; but were very formal, and required considerable time.†

Our Lord further directed the seventy that “*into whatsoever house they entered, they should first say, Peace be to this house.*” This was the usual form of salutation on entering a house. “Get ye up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name,” said David to his ten young men, “and thus shall ye say to him, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.” Peace, in such salutations, seems to have been put for every blessing; and in using the expression, the seventy must have referred, not only to all providential good, but to the blessings of the gospel of peace, which they were sent out to publish and propose. “*And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it.*” According to a Hebrew form of expression, persons are called the sons, or children, of that by which they are characterized, or to which they are exposed, whether good or evil. Thus, we are to understand by “children of disobedience,” disobedient persons;

* 2 Kings iv. 29.

† “*Salutationes istæ non fiebant levi gestu verbove, sed multis percunctationibus, bonisque omnibus trahebantur, non sine multis corporis flexionibus, osculis, amplexibus.*” —*Grotius, in locum.*

by the “children of this world,” worldly persons; by the “children of light,” enlightened persons; by “sons of Belial,” wicked persons; by “children of wrath,” persons exposed to wrath; by “sons of death,” persons appointed to die; by “the children of the promise,” the persons to whom the promise was made, and on whom its blessings were to come. So, by “the son of peace,” we are to understand any man who was in possession, or who was desirous, of the blessings included in the word *peace*, or, any one on whom He, from whom all blessings flow, intended to confer peace. If there be any such person in the house, “your peace shall rest upon it;” your prayer for a blessing shall be answered favourably for the object of it: and “*if not*”—if there be no such person there, yet your prayer, though lost to the house, shall not be lost to yourselves—“*it shall turn to you again*,” you yourselves shall be the better for these pious and benevolent wishes. Thus, the Psalmist testifies* that “his prayer” for his enemies “returned into his own bosom.” And, as in Isa. xlix., “Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely, my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.”—“Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.” Let us all habitually cherish a sincere and ardent desire for the temporal and spiritual welfare of those with whom we may have any intercourse; hoping, as we may justly hope, that in some cases that desire will be fully gratified, and believing what our own experience will completely confirm, that when it shall not succeed as to its direct object, it will reflect back the happiest influence on our own edification and comfort.

Our Lord directed the seventy to remain wherever they were received, “*eating and drinking such things as they gave*,” and “*as were set before them*.”† “cheerfully and contentedly eating and drinking what they found; for, it was beneath them to be very solicitous and nice, and to occasion any unnecessary trouble in the family.”‡ In this, too, our Lord, probably, referred to those complicated rules of the Pharisees respecting meats and drinks, which were founded on their own traditions, and not enjoined in the law of Moses. They were extremely punctilious in these matters; and it was difficult to set a meal, or a dish before them with which they would not find some fault, or with regard to which they would not raise some scruple about partaking of it. Christ directed them to disregard all such trifles. If not yet actually arrived, the time was at hand when the rule was to be followed, which was afterwards expressly laid down by the apostle Paul: “If any of them that believe not bid you to a

* Ps. xxxv. 13.

† Τα παρατιθίμια—Ἦν διὰ τα μὲν παρατιθίμια αὐτῶν ἵσα αὐτῶν τοῖς καλουμένοις ἐπὶ τοῖς δεύμασι, “The same things were always set before Cyrus, as before those who were invited to the entertainment.”—*Cyropæd.* lib. ii.

‡ Doddridge.

feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you eat, asking no questions for conscience' sake."

Jesus stated, as the reason why the seventy should readily receive such assistance, that "*the labourer is worthy of his hire.*" With the same view, he said (Matt. x. 10) in reference to the twelve, "The workman is worthy of his meat." The minister of the gospel is a labourer, or workman; and he is to exert himself diligently in his calling. It was never intended that he should live in splendour, or receive any income, and do nothing, or almost nothing, for it. It is reasonable and just, however, that he should be maintained for his work done. Suitable maintenance is his due: how that is to be furnished must depend on various circumstances, but the principle itself is clear and scriptural. In the words of the apostle to the Corinthians: "Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

As to the city that should reject the message of peace which the seventy were to carry—our Lord said, "*It shall be more tolerable in that day,*" that is, in the great day of judgment, "*for Sodom, than for that city.*" We learn from this, that future punishments will be inflicted in different degrees, according to the different degrees of guilt; and thus while condemnation will be in every case dreadful, so that every sinner ought to flee for safety to the Redeemer, and turn that he may live, it is an awful mistake, if any profligate persons, looking on themselves as lost, act on the principle that it matters not to what pitch of worthlessness they proceed; for, as their guilt increases, so will their misery. We learn, too, from this passage, that the guilt of those who despise Christian privileges is peculiarly great—much greater than that of the heathen; and, therefore, that *we* are under peculiar obligations to receive the truth, as we would show that we value the most signal privileges, and would escape the heaviest doom.*

Our Lord, being thus led to reflect on the inexcusable obstinacy of many of those among whom he himself had already preached and wrought miracles, exclaims, "*Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.*" From a similar passage, in Matt. xi. 20, it appears that Chorazin and Bethsaida were two of the cities in which most of "Christ's mighty works" had been done, and that he thus upbraided them because they repented not. Chorazin is not mentioned in Scripture, except in these two passages: it is supposed to have been situated on the sea of Galilee, near Capernaum. As to Beth-

* For an illustration of verse 11, see Lecture on chapter ix. verse 5.

saida, we had occasion, in the preceding chapter, to speak of it, and found Christ preaching and working miracles of healing in the sight of its inhabitants. Though we are incompetent to solve every difficulty which might be raised on the case, if this was not merely speaking according to human probability,* he who knew the hearts of men, declared that if such advantages had been enjoyed by Tyre and Sidon (which, for their idolatry and other crimes, were destroyed according to the predictions of the prophets; they would have repented, wearing sackcloth, or the coarsest cloth, and casting dust and ashes on their heads, in token of humiliation and self-abhorrence. It is a fearful thought, that, naturally inclined to resist the means of grace as the human heart always is, the habit of resistance renders it worse and worse, and doubly depraved and obstinate. Consider this, ye who are now lending a deaf ear to the merciful call of the gospel. If you continue to do so a little longer, even the slight compunctions you yet feel may soon utterly vanish, so that your conscience may become seared as with a hot iron, and your hearts fully set in you to do evil; and so, in your case, a lifetime of increasing depravity may end in an eternity of intolerable woe.

In connexion with these two cities, Jesus mentions another, namely, Capernaum. Born at Bethlehem, and having spent his early years at Nazareth, he afterwards abode chiefly at Capernaum; and there, of course, he often taught and did many mighty works. There, however, general impenitence and unbelief reigned. Therefore, he thus apostrophizes that city, "*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven,*" that is, in point of honourable religious privileges, still more than worldly advantages, "*shall be thrust down to hell*" in heavy punishment, because of the abuse of these privileges. From being a flourishing, it became an insignificant place; and those of the inhabitants who died in unbelief perished with an awful and endless condemnation. The fall and destruction of the wicked are set forth under a similar figure, in such passages as these: "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever," and "they who have seen him shall say, Where is he?"—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"†—Now, surely we must acknowledge that our country is peculiarly blessed with religious privileges, as well as with civil. God forbid that the unbelief of its inhabitants should prove its temporal ruin as a nation, and their own still more awful, endless ruin as individuals.

Our Lord closes his instructions to the seventy in words similar to those which, according to Matthew, he addressed to the

* See Ezek. iii. 6.

† Job xx. 6; Isa. xiv. 12-15. Addressing himself to Antony, concerning the fall of his colleague, Cicero says, "*Collegam tuum de cælo detraxisti—Thou hast pulled down thy colleague from heaven;*" and he says of the overthrow of Pompey, "*Ex astris decidisse,*"—that he had fallen from the stars.—*Philippic* ii. and *Ep. lib. i.* 20.

twelve: "*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*" It is plain that the way in which men treat a messenger is demonstrative of the feeling they entertain towards him who sent him forth. Hence, the Son being sent by the Father, they that honour the Son honour the Father also, and the contrary; and hence, there is no true religion but Christianity. What is here said of the seventy is also substantially applicable to all ministers who come preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. It would be well if those who undervalue and refuse to obey the words of such, would recollect that, whatever excuses they may plead, and whatever objections they may make to the messengers, when the message itself is plainly from Christ, their rejection of it is the rejection of Christ himself. May the great Head of the Church, by the influences of his Spirit, prepare all your hearts to submit to his kingdom, and to bid all his faithful messengers welcome in his name.

Verse 17: "*And the seventy returned.*" We are not informed how long they were out: from the circumstances of the history, however, it seems as if their mission had not lasted long. Some think that they were sent out when Jesus was about to go up to the feast of tabernacles, and after visiting the appointed places, met him at Jerusalem, or the neighbourhood, before the feast (which lasted eight days) was over. They returned to give an account to their Master of the success of their mission: and so must all who preach the gospel. Yes, it is a serious consideration for you, as well as for us, that we watch for your souls as those who must give an account. Obey, therefore, and submit yourselves in the truth, that we may give in our account with joy, and not with grief; for that would be unprofitable for you. The seventy returned again "*with joy,*" delighted with the miraculous power which they had been enabled to display; and informing our Lord that, though he had only spoken to them of healing diseases, "*even the devils were subject to them,*" and departed from possessed persons at their word pronounced in "*his name,*" and accompanied with his power. On this, Jesus said unto them, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*" The Son of God had beheld Satan and his angels literally expelled from heaven immediately on their rebellion against the Almighty. His all-seeing eye also accompanied the seventy, beholding what they did in expelling Satan from the bodies of the possessed, and from the height of his power; so that what they told was no new information to him. In this success, too, he beheld a pledge of his final and complete conquest over the devil, for the purpose of destroying whose works he was manifested.

In the 19th verse, Jesus may be considered as renewing the mission of the seventy, and confirming their miraculous gifts: "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*" In these words he appears to have alluded to Psalm

xc. 13: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." Our Lord also said, in Mark xvi. 17: "These signs shall follow them that believe"—"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." As addressed to the seventy, and to the other followers of Christ, the words may be understood both literally and figuratively. Though many of the inspired teachers were at last to be hurt and put to death, yet they were all secured, for a time, and as long as their labours were necessary. "Be not afraid," said Jesus to Paul, "but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." The same apostle experienced an extraordinary literal protection on the island of Melita; where, though a viper had fastened on his hand, he felt no harm. This implied that the seventy were to be protected from danger while they had any work to do, and that they were to continue to cast out devils. And it implied, in the figurative sense, that not only the seventy, but all believers, were to triumph over all their spiritual adversaries. Personally, and in his people, the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Though his people may be exposed to outward annoyance, their souls are safe. They shall be more than conquerors: and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly.

It would seem as if our Lord saw something not altogether right in the spirit by which the seventy were influenced, when they came to him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name." Or, if they had not actually lost, they were, perhaps, in danger of losing, a becoming frame of mind; so that he saw it proper to put in a caution. They were, probably, in danger of vanity and false trust, because of the wonderful power with which they found themselves invested; at the very time they were confessing that they had done all in his name, they were glorying in the gift, as reflecting honour on themselves; and it is likely that they, with the other disciples, were thinking that such gifts might be the means of raising them to temporal power. However this may have been, Jesus addressed them in words calculated to check all such ideas, and pointed out to them a far superior cause of joy: "*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.*" It frequently happens that when, in scriptural phraseology, two things are brought together, so that the one is in words recommended, and the other in words forbidden, the passage is to be understood, not absolutely, but comparatively; the thing thus in words forbidden being not wrong in itself, but only of much less importance than the other. Thus, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" that is, mercy rather than sacrifice, for, sacrifice was then required. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" that is,

labour more for the latter, than the former; for, diligence to obtain the necessaries of this life is certainly incumbent. "Look not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen;" that is, not so much, nor so anxiously, at the former as at the latter. And so, in the passage before us, our Lord did not prohibit all joy on account of the success mentioned, for, it was a just cause of joy, and we are told he himself "in that hour rejoiced in spirit;" but he saw that the seventy were looking too much to the mere miracles, and in a great measure forgetting a far nobler circumstance, namely, that connected with their own personal salvation, in which they should have rejoiced much more. It does not necessarily follow, from the way in which he here expresses himself, that the seventy were, without exception, to be saved, though it is possible, and even likely; our Lord may have addressed himself to them in a way which was generally applicable, as he addressed the twelve as disciples, though one of them was a traitor. The mere gift of miracles, however noble, was not necessarily connected with any spiritual and everlasting good; for these are the words of Christ: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name! and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The special love of God, a personal interest in Christ, and the ordinary converting and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, were certainly, in all cases, of much more importance than extraordinary and miraculous gifts, however numerous and astonishing; therefore, our Lord said to the seventy, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Waiving now all further reference to the seventy, and to every other part of the passage, we shall expatiate a little in conclusion, on this last verse, in a way directly applicable at the present moment, and with an earnest desire that the joyful and awakening truths which it embodies may be brought home to your judgment and feelings by the Spirit of the living God.

The expression, having their "names written in heaven," is in allusion to the custom of enrolling the names of those who are admitted freemen of any city, the register of which citizenship is preserved with care. Among the Jews, this also served to show the genealogy and place of birth. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there."* Now, the people of God may be considered as having their names written in heaven, in respect both of the eternal purpose according to the election of grace, and of their actual introduction into the kingdom of God when they are converted in time. The first idea, namely, that of their enrolment in the divine purpose, is chiefly intended in Rev. xvii. 8, where it is said that

* Ps. lxxxvii. 6.

they shall wonder after the beast, "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." And the second idea, or accession to the Church by actual conversion, is chiefly intended in Eph. ii. 19, where it is said, of those who are reconciled, and who have access, through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father, that they "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The following additional passages, in which God's people are represented as enrolled, or written down, and which refer, some more plainly to the one idea, and some to the other, though they may all include both, throw still further light on the subject. Isa. iv. 3: "He that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." Dan. xii. 1: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Phil. iv. 3: "My fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." Rev. xiii. 8: "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him," that is, the beast, "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Rev. xx. 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were found written in the books, according to their works."

Such, then, being the nature and blessed consequences of this enrolment, surely every wise man should be anxiously desirous to know if his name be written in heaven. But is such knowledge attainable? It is attainable by believers. It is true that they have no access to the book of the divine decrees, so as to be able to obtain a direct sight of their names there. But there is another ascertainable point, from which their registration there may certainly be inferred; and to this point their inquiring attention should be turned. You may know, my friends, that the Lord intended to save you, if he has actually saved you. If you have been convinced of sin, and led to the Saviour; if you have been renewed in the spirit of your mind, and created again in Christ Jesus unto good works; if you are born from above, and have a heavenly nature; if you are pressing into the kingdom of God, and seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; if you are looking habitually to heaven, and chiefly concerned to prepare for heaven; if you have set your affections on things above, and are giving all diligence to make your calling and election sure; in a word, if your treasure, and your heart, and your conversation are in heaven, then you may certainly conclude that your names are written in heaven.

But give ear, all ye of whom, notwithstanding all your infirmities, this may be truly said, while we repeatedly urge on your consideration the blessed fact that you have far greater cause for joy in your names being written in heaven than you

possibly can have in anything else. Be your advantages in other respects as numerous, and as great, as they may, here is an advantage which outweighs them all: and be your other causes of joy what they may, here is a cause of joy in which all others should be, as it were, lost and swallowed up.

Are you possessed of a sufficiency, or even of *wealth*, of this world's goods? Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that you are rich, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Earthly riches call for your gratitude, as placing you above want, and putting it in your power to do good; but what are they in comparison of spiritual and eternal riches—"the unsearchable riches of Christ?" All things are yours, for ye are Christ's: therefore rejoice in this. Are you *learned* in human knowledge? Such knowledge is far better than ignorance, and may bring some pleasure and advantage along with it. Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. In human wisdom there is often much sorrow, and there never can be safety and peace: rejoice, therefore, rather because you have the wisdom which is from above, and because the Holy Scriptures have made you wise to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. They who are thus wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. Are you *honoured*, and highly esteemed, by your fellow-creatures? This is so far well: notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven; for, while earthly honour is transitory and vain, the honour that cometh from God is substantial and permanent, and he says to each of you, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Are you invested with worldly *power*? Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven; "for he that is slow to wrath is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city:" and you have power to tread on serpents and scorpions, in the spiritual sense, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Therefore, rejoice in putting forth this power, remembering the words of your Lord, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Have you kind and pious *friends*? Be thankful to God and to them: notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," saith Christ, "is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Endearing as such connexions may be, ought you not to be still more joyful, when you think that you have God for your Father, and Jesus for your friend—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother? Indeed, no connexion with any human being whatever, however exalted, or excellent, not even the being nearly related to Christ himself according to the flesh, could

compare, in importance, with the being savingly interested in him. When "a certain woman lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," he replied, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Are you in bodily *health*? It is a great blessing: but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven—rather rejoice because you have undergone a spiritual cure, and by Christ's stripes have been healed. It is well that your bodies, but it is far better that your souls, prosper and are in health. Rejoice in this, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Your temporal *life* is continued, and this is a great blessing, for, truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Rather rejoice, however, rejoice still more, because you are quickened to spiritual life. Valuable as your temporal life is, your spiritual life is still more so, for, you cannot live here always, but when death shall send you away, your spiritual life secures your entrance on life everlasting. Your life being hid with Christ in God, when he who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Are you blessed with *civil immunities* in this land of freemen? More joyful may you be because of your emancipation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and your having come to mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Are you favoured with distinguished outward *religious privileges*? Happy are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear, those things which many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear, but were not so favoured. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Rather rejoice because these privileges have been accompanied to you with the special grace of God, to render them effectual. Many have abused and are abusing the very same external privileges, while you have improved and are improving them, to your soul's good and your Saviour's glory. With what humility, and yet with what joy, does it become you to reflect on this! "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but your Father who is in heaven." Give him the praise, and rejoice in his salvation: and "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." You see, then, that you have greater cause for rejoicing because your names are written in heaven, than you can possibly have in any other advantages, however numerous and great they may be.

But this is not all, for it may with truth be said, not only that this is the greatest among all your causes of joy, but that this affords you a sufficient cause of joy in opposition to the greatest disadvantages and sorrows. Are you poor? Rejoice,

notwithstanding of your poverty, because your names are written in heaven. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—"Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation." Are you exposed to trouble because of your religion? Rejoice notwithstanding:—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." Are you sickly and weakly? Rejoice notwithstanding, for your souls are recovering, and you are going to the place where the inhabitants shall never say, I am sick, because the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity. Are you friendless? Rejoice notwithstanding, because your names are written in heaven. You have an Almighty friend, and there is no creature to divide with him your affection. Should you be necessarily detained from religious ordinances, rejoice notwithstanding; for God is ever ready to meet with you. In the prospect of death rejoice notwithstanding, because your names are written in heaven; for then it is that your perfect happiness draweth nigh.

In short, in whatever circumstances you may be placed, whether prosperous or adverse, rejoice in this glorious privilege. The maintenance of this joy is most important to your active obedience, for the joy of the Lord will be your strength. "Rejoice, then, evermore."—"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."—"Be glad in the Lord, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." That you should be dejected is most unbecoming of your privileges, and most unjust to your God. "Rejoice with trembling," but rejoice with all your heart. Rejoice with all humility, but with all confidence. It is meet that you should rejoice now in that in which you shall rejoice for ever: for "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

But, the right dividing of the word of truth calls for the concluding admonition that those of you who are not so joined to the Lord, and to the Church, on earth, by conversion, as to have reason to believe that your names are written in heaven, have no solid cause of joy in anything. The converse of this Scripture holds true: and we beseech you to note this, lest you deceive yourselves to your ruin. What though you are outwardly prosperous? Notwithstanding, rejoice not in this, for you have no evidence that your names are written in heaven. Why boast of your liberty, when you are the slaves of corruption? Why speak of your honour, when you have reason to fear that you shall come forth to shame and everlasting contempt? Why rejoice in your health, when, spiritually, your whole head is sick,

and your whole heart faint, and from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head, there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores? Your bodily health cannot last for ever; sickness, your last sickness, will come, and death will come, and where are you then? Why, ye profane ones, and why, ye decent formalists, boast of your religious privileges? Think of the words, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell." Why rejoice even in life itself? at least, why rejoice in life as you are now spending it? While you live in this way, you are only treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of God's righteous judgment. Nay, what would be all your griefs, if you should be in trouble, compared with the grief which should now press on you in the thought of your present and coming condemnation? Cease, then, from your foolish rejoicing. "Be afflicted and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Repent in dust and ashes. Betake yourselves to the free mercy of God, by faith in the Redeemer. Thus, though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning; you will have reason ever after to rejoice in everything, whether painful or pleasant; and at last, the sanctified joys of time will usher in the triumphant joys of eternity.

LECTURE LIII.

LUKE X. 21-24.

“ In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

THE seventy had just returned to Christ, and related to him, with much exultation, the miracles which they had performed on their mission; and he, perceiving that they were dwelling on the mere miraculous gift, to the forgetfulness of a far more important point, had said to them: “ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” At the same time, what had happened was, in itself, and still more in its consequences, a just cause of joy; and Luke now tells us that “ *in that hour Jesus*” himself “ *rejoiced*”—greatly rejoiced, for so the word signifies. And is it not refreshing to find him who was so correctly described as “ the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” now rejoicing? He rejoiced, when he saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven; and he still rejoices in every instance of Satan’s overthrow. He rejoices over every single lost sheep that is found; and the pleasure to arise from the united triumphs of his love, in the salvation of all his people, was an important ingredient in the joy which was set before him, and for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. When he thus sees of the travail of his soul, he is satisfied. Let us mark, my friends, this truly ingenuous and winning motive to exchange sin and ruin, for piety and salvation, namely, that we shall thereby gratify the divine Redeemer, and give joy to the heart which, for us, was melted like wax, and pierced through with many sorrows. Surely, we are the most obdurate and ungrateful of creatures, if we deem any pleasure whatever equal to the pleasure of pleasing him.

Jesus rejoiced “ *in spirit* ;”—his joy was inward, and deeply seated, and then vented itself in words of grateful praise. And so, all our prayers and praises should be the expression of the sincere feelings of our hearts. In this act of praise, Christ ad-

dressed himself to his "*Father*." God the Father is Christ's Father, in respect both of his human and divine nature; that is, in respect both of his miraculous conception and eternal generation. This relation of Father and Son, in respect of Christ's divine nature, implies equality of nature: for while, in respect of his human nature, Christ says, "My Father is greater than I;" in respect of his divine, he says, "I and my Father are one." In like manner, in so far as it can be said of us dependent creatures, we should come to God as our Father, not merely as he is our Creator, but as he is our reconciled Father through Jesus Christ. Jesus also addresses his Father, as "*Lord of heaven and earth*." Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool. He is the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Owner of all. And so we should regard and acknowledge him in all our approaches. Taking the whole of this invocation together, we are reminded of the combination of reverence and confidence which becomes us in our devotional addresses. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" and yet we should, at the same time, guard against indecent familiarity and levity; for the Lord of heaven and earth is worthy to be feared, and he will be sanctified in all that draw nigh to him.

"*I thank thee*,"* says Jesus: the word might have been rendered, I confess unto thee, or, I full agree with thee; and the nature of the subject shows that this is a confession of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. I thank thee, "*that thou hast hid these things*," the mysteries of the gospel, "*from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*." There may here be some reference to the description of persons to whom the truths of the gospel were first miraculously revealed, in order that they might publish them authoritatively to the world. God did not choose, for this purpose, philosophers or politicians, or scribes or pharisees, but plain, simple, and in general, illiterate men. Now, this was a reason of thankfulness. Had philosophers been chosen, they might have debased the gospel by a mixture of their own theories: had secular politicians been chosen, they might have sought to spread it by dexterous contrivances, or carnal power, and thus one grand proof of its divinity might have been wanting. This, too, showed God's sovereignty, in proceeding in a way that poured contempt on human sagacity and human power.

But these words seem chiefly to refer to the description of persons who then had, and who always have, gospel truths revealed in a saving way to their minds. Our Lord says that God hides these things from the wise and prudent. We are not to suppose that God exerts any positive influence on the minds of men, to conceal from them the truth and nature of the gospel, and to make them unbelieving and disobedient; for that would be blasphemously to represent him as the author of sin.

* *Ἐξομολογούμεναι.*

The strong expressions, *blinding* and *hardening*, which frequently occur in Scripture, are only properly understood when we remember that those who obstinately and wilfully shut their eyes and harden their hearts to the truth, are often judicially and righteously left by God to their own blindness and hardness, so that they, of course, continue in them; and when we remember that, according to Scripture language, and in this sense, God is said to do what he permits. This opens up at once the strong and pious meaning of what is said of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart. This, too, explains the passage repeatedly quoted from Isaiah, as in John xii. 39: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias had said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw Christ's glory, and spake of him." And nearly to the same purpose are these words, Acts xxviii. 24: "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying: Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed: lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." You will observe that, notwithstanding these strong expressions, the blindness of unbelievers is imputed to themselves, and not to God, in the positive sense implying guilt, for, it is said, "Their eyes have they closed:" that is, they themselves have willingly closed their own eyes. While the withholding of needful grace from the obstinate ought to be felt as a most awakening motive to seek after God, and to yield to convictions, it can never be justly viewed as a discouragement by any who are in earnest about the salvation of their souls; but, on the contrary, it implies that instead of disappointing those who are seeking after him, he will thoroughly illuminate their minds, and soften their hearts, nay, that he is already graciously dealing with their souls.

When the things of salvation are said to be hid from "the wise and prudent," we are not to suppose that there is any inconsistency between the gospel and true wisdom and prudence; or that the gospel is in any way irrational, and cannot stand the test of reason; or hurtful, and incompatible with our true advantage. On the contrary, Christ—Christ crucified—the way of salvation unfolded through the Redeemer, is emphatically, "the wisdom of God;" the doctrine and service of Christ are in the highest degree reasonable; and none are so justly entitled to be called prudent, as those who seek after that godliness

which is "profitable unto all things." Nor is it intended to be here affirmed that all uncommonly learned and prudent men reject the gospel; for it is well known that there have been not a few instances of men of the very first literary and philosophical attainments, who have been distinguished for their Christian piety, and whose talents have been consecrated, and eminently blessed, to the promotion of religion in the world. Still, however, the wisdom from above, is something essentially different from the wisdom which is from beneath; the gospel, though wisdom itself, is something entirely different from the wisdom of men. "Howbeit," saith Paul to the Corinthians, "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world." Being, then, something quite different, this circumstance alone may show that it is not very surprising, at least not so surprising as to be any good occasion of stumbling, that many who attain to the other come short of this. But this is not all; there is not only a difference but an opposition between these kinds of wisdom, when men trust in their human wisdom, and are proud of it: and to this unhappy state of mind our Lord seems here particularly to refer. Nor is even this all: for, the obliquity of the understanding of fallen man with regard to spiritual things, causes him, when he is trusting to himself, to look on heavenly wisdom as folly; and the depravity of the heart of fallen man presents another obstacle to the holy and purifying doctrines of the gospel, and still further thickens the gloom, and shuts out the light. Hence, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." All who walk theoretically and practically, in the vanity of their unenlightened and unrenewed mind, have "the understanding darkened, and are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The blindness and the depravity mutually aggravate each other.

Though, therefore, nothing is so truly wise and prudent as to embrace the gospel, it is a fact that many who are commonly considered as wise and prudent, and many who have really made great attainments in human wisdom, and who are in prosperous and eminent stations of life, reject the gospel. The words of the apostle to the Corinthians are still very generally applicable: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Our Lord gives thanks to his Father that, though he hides these things from the wise and prudent, "*he reveals them unto*

babes." We observed that God does not exert any positive influence to blind and harden; but we now remark that he does put forth positive energy to enlighten and save. Of the two leading meanings of the word "reveal" we shall speak afterwards. Adverting here to the meaning of the word "*babes*," we may observe, that the power of divine grace is sometimes signally displayed in those who are very young, and who may be called babes, or children in the literal sense. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies," saith the Psalmist, "that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger;" and this received a remarkable fulfilment on the occasion of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" Consider this passage of gospel history well, ye children who are now present! You will find it in Matthew, 21st chapter, 15th and 16th verses. Did these children, long ago, in the temple of Jerusalem, cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David"—that is, Ascribe blessing and praise to Jesus?—why should you not cry Hosanna too? Is he not as blessed and as gracious a Saviour to-day as he was then? Is he not still saying in his Word, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven?" Does it not, then, become you, as soon as you can understand and feel anything of his grace, to imitate these children of Jerusalem in their regard to Christ? It does. See then that you know him and believe in him, and love him, and obey him, and join heartily in the song of praise to him whenever it is sung.

But, by babes we are here chiefly to understand all those who, whatever be their age, are lowly, humble, and teachable. That children, notwithstanding their natural frowardness, are, generally speaking, more sensible of their inferiority, and more simple and teachable than grown-up persons, is certain; and therefore, Christ refers to children as an emblem of his true disciples. When we consider the first disciples, we see that they were generally men of lowly birth and station, and unlearned; and the same holds true, for the most part, of his people in every age. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" But, whatever may be their outward circumstances, and their worldly advantages, or disadvantages, those who have the things of salvation revealed to them, are babes in the sense of simplicity and teachableness. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."—"The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach

his way." Here, however, lest any should imagine that a man's humility and teachableness, which have so happy a result, are of himself, so as to be, in some degree, the meritorious cause of his being made to differ from others, and of his salvation; let it be remembered, that it is the grace of God, from the very first, which causes him to differ—makes him as a babe, and makes him willing in the day of God's power. While, therefore, we are to be careful to cultivate this spirit of humility as a duty, we are to look for it as a grace all along.

Let us observe now, the two different senses in which God reveals these things. The one sense is the extraordinary and miraculous revelation, by which he discovered to prophets and apostles things formerly unknown, or imperfectly known, in order to their being published to the world as the rule of faith and conduct, or to be useful in some other way, distinct as to the matter, from the already written Word. In this sense of inspiration we are to understand the contents of the Scriptures in general to have been revealed to them: and in this sense, the word is plainly used in such passages as these: "I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."—"I neither received it" (that is, the gospel) "of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* The other sense in which the word is used, is to express the ordinary, saving teaching of the Spirit—the aid whereby men are enabled to understand and receive what is already written in Scripture, and are made wise to salvation. This seems chiefly intended in the passage under consideration, even with regard to these miraculously gifted disciples, for their names "are written in heaven;" though, you will observe, that with regard to those who were miraculously gifted and also brought into a state of personal salvation, it must have been applicable in both senses. This personal, saving discovery of the truth is also described in the words of our Lord to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." And this chiefly, if not exclusively, is the meaning of the expression, when Paul prays for all the saints at Ephesus, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. In the former sense—that is, the sense of miraculous inspiration—these things were revealed only to a few, and at particular times, who yet might not be believers; and the revelation is long ago completed and closed. In the latter sense, these things have been, and will continue to

* Eph. iii. 3; Gal. i. 12.

be, revealed, or savingly discovered, to all the people of God, in every age, that all of them may be brought to glory.

Our Lord concludes this brief but weighty prayer in these words, "*Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" Referring to what he had just stated concerning God hiding these things from the wise and prudent, and revealing them unto babes, the "even so" may be considered both as a strong affirmation that such was the fact, and also a hearty acquiescence in it. It is as if he had said, "So it is, and so let it be, since such is thy will." It is a salutary, though humbling and difficult lesson for men to learn, that God is sovereign in the communication of his mercy, and that, though the reason of his having mercy lies not in the merit of its object, but in his own will, that will is not a blind, or unjust fate, but is influenced by good reasons, though they are unfathomable by us—is, in short, holy, just, and good. Such a view of the divine sovereignty as this is most rational, as well as most scriptural: it is directly calculated to produce a spirit of pious dependence on God; and it is often the best resource to his people, in the contemplation of many of his mysterious dealings. In reference to this point, the apostle tells the Ephesians, that God proceeds "according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," and "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," and that "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Let us, like our Saviour, devoutly acknowledge the truth, and thankfully acquiesce in the rectitude and goodness of this doctrine, and we shall find both its sanctifying and comforting efficacy. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Having thus addressed himself, in a direct act of thanksgiving, to his Father, with his eyes, we may suppose, lifted up to heaven, Jesus now looks to all who were present, and thus proceeds, in a connected train of thought: "*All things are delivered to me of my Father.*" As God, Christ is equal with the Father, and one with him; but as Mediator between God and man (and it is in this character he here speaks), he sustains a delegated authority. He is appointed, in the divine counsel of mercy, to negotiate in the glorious business of the salvation of sinners by the covenant of grace; so that he not only has all things in himself as God, but all things committed, delivered over, to him as Mediator, for the purpose of being communicated to those whom he came to save, all of whom, moreover, are themselves delivered to him to be saved, while all things are rendered subservient to him, and put under his feet, for this end. It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should

dwell, in order that we, out of his fulness, should receive grace upon grace. Very similar to what he says here are his words at the beginning of his intercessory prayer: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him:" so also, after his resurrection, he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth:" and at his ascension, God set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, and gave him a name which is above every name.

Our Lord goes on to say, "*And no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father;*" that is, none—no person, fully understands the Son but the Father. There are mysteries relating to the Son, which none but the Father can comprehend; and this shows the Son to be, strictly speaking, divine. "*And*" no man knoweth "*who the Father is, but the Son;*" that is, none fully knows the Father, except the Son; and this also proves the Son to be God, and possessed of that infinite knowledge which is necessary to comprehend an infinite object. When our Lord says that none knoweth the Son but the Father, and none the Father but the Son, he is not to be understood as speaking to the exclusion of the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of wisdom and of perfect understanding. What is here said is quite consistent with the passage to the Corinthians:* "*The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*" These passages, when compared, and brought together, plainly establish the doctrine of the Trinity, three persons in one God, united in infinite wisdom, and in the perfect knowledge of each other. Christ adds, that no man knoweth who the Father is, but "*he to whom the Son will reveal him.*"—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The whole of that knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, which has been published to the world, has been revealed by Christ himself, or by his divinely commissioned prophets and apostles, for his sake. Besides, no individual comes to the personally saving knowledge of God, except by the particular revelation, or discovery, of scriptural truth to his soul, by the grace and Spirit of the Son of God. He opens men's understandings to understand the Scriptures, and teaches them rightly to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

Then Jesus, turning away from the multitude, "*said to his disciples, privately,*" or apart, "*Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings,*" or, as in Matthew,† prophets and righteous men, "*have desired*

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.—This mutual and equal knowledge is declared, John x. 15, &c.

† Mat. xiii. 17.

to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The privileges of the Church were well understood by the ancient prophets and worthies (among whom were some of kingly dignity), to be intended to be so much greater after the coming of Messiah than they were before, that they looked forward to his coming with great desire. Jacob spoke of him, on his death-bed, as Shiloh, and "waited for his salvation." Abraham "rejoiced to see," or greatly desired to see, "his day, and he saw it," by faith, though not by sight, "and was glad." David evidently looked forward with great delight to Him in whom his kingdom was to be established for ever. Messiah's coming was a constant subject of prayer with the Jewish Church. He who was "the Desire of all nations," was especially the Desire of his own. The spirit of the prophets in regard to gospel salvation, is thus described by Peter: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The Old Testament saints "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them." The outward privileges then enjoyed by those who saw and heard what these disciples saw and heard, were very great—great beyond those of the Old Testament saints. But more especially, blessed were they whose eyes were opened to see, and their ears to hear, these things, so as to believe to the saving of their souls. Already blessed in the light of truth, the favour of God, and peace of conscience, they were preparing, and looking for the perfect and endless blessedness of immortality.

A few things may yet be added, for the further improvement of this passage.

1. *Let me ask you if you resemble Christ in rejoicing at the success of true religion ?* He greatly rejoiced in spirit, and gave thanks to his Father, that Satan was dethroned, and that, though some were obstinate, others were blessed with a saving discovery of divine things. In like manner, all his genuine followers are alive to the importance of the overthrow of Satan from tyrannizing over the minds of sinners, and are glad when they see or hear of God's having savingly revealed his Son in the hearts of any. When Barnabas came to Antioch, and "had seen the grace of God," then "he was glad ;"—"for he was a good man," and that joy was one evidence of his goodness. When Paul and Barnabas and certain other Christians "passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy unto all the brethren." Now, how is it with you in this respect? If it be really so that the sight, or intelligence, of such success, bring you no pleasure, then you

have not the Spirit of Christ, and of course, are none of his : or, if it bring you only a very slight and questionable satisfaction, then the faith is at a very low ebb in your souls, and you are peculiarly called on to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which are ready to die. Surely, all who love the Lord, and are alive to the value of the human soul, ought to look on the conversion of sinners as the most important of earthly events, and be very glad, and give glory to God, when they hear of such a happy change taking place on men, of whatever rank, or whatever country. When people that were walking in darkness see the great Light, and God, by their accession, multiplies his own nation, then let our joy be increased : let us joy before him according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

If you would be saved,

2. *Beware of being proud of your own wisdom and prudence, and cherish the humility and teachableness of babes.* Human learning is never despised but by those who are destitute of it ; and common, worldly prudence, is never despised but by those who are themselves lamentably stupid, or rash : but learning and prudence are both dangerous when not under a higher than human guidance. " Though ignorance is certainly to be avoided, and that man is brutish who desires not to know ; yet it is much to be lamented that people of the finest parts, and those who have the greatest compass of human erudition, are most exposed to the infelicity of thinking highly of themselves, and of becoming dupes to their own vanity, or the splendid fallacies of the human understanding. In proportion as they can make these fallacies shining and specious, they are the more liable to be ensnared themselves, as well as more dangerous in deluding others. Most of the arch-heretics were men of undoubted parts and accomplishments, as to the world ; but they sought distinction by those parts, invented new opinions to create it, and at length became the victims of their own vanity and pride. The wisest of men, or rather God by him, gives a strong caution, therefore, on this head, ' Lean not to thine own understanding.' Nothing can be truly wisdom, which does not render a man better and happier for eternity. Where, then, shall we find this, except in the Bible ? By whom shall we obtain this, but by the Spirit of wisdom ? And what is he who despises and rejects both ? The answer," to this last question, " is a harsh monosyllable in proud ears ; and a man would not venture to utter it, but from something better than men's authority." * " He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool." Beware of this. " Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The gospel is proposed to you, not with the view of asking your opinion on it, or of exercising your ingenuity, but as that by which, according as you receive or reject it, you are to be

* Serle.

saved or condemned. Give attention to it, then, when it is read and preached; attend to it with that deep sense of its importance, with that conviction of your own insufficiency, with that spirit of implicit submission to the declaration of Scripture, and with that earnest prayer for divine instruction, which God wisely requires, and which he will graciously bless.

3. We should learn, from the 22d verse, *never to separate the truths of what is called natural religion from the gospel.* The idea that there is, or can be, any true and acceptable religion whatever, apart from the revelation of Christ, is here shown to be quite preposterous. The true Witness declares that no man can know the Father except he to whom he shall reveal him. Hence, all worship offered to God, not through Christ, is offered to an unknown God, to a God of men's own imagination, and is therefore idolatrous. Jesus Christ not only reveals the true God, but is himself the way, the truth, and the life; so that no man cometh unto the Father but through him. Let, then, all our ideas of religion be of a truly Christian complexion. "Ye believe in God," saith Christ, "believe also in me." "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him."

4. *Let us be thankful for the precious religious privileges which we enjoy, and careful to improve them.* All things considered, our privileges are at least as great as were the privileges of those to whom Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." But we cannot too anxiously inquire whether we be improving these privileges to our actual personal salvation: for thus alone it is that they can ultimately prove blessings to us. Lord, grant that we may not "receive the grace of God in vain," but may be of those of whom, in the highest sense of the words, it may be said, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Lastly: Are we blessed, because our eyes see, and our ears hear these things?—then, *Christian benevolence should lead us to feel for those who enjoy no such privileges, and to do everything we can to extend them to the utmost corners of the earth.* As in Old Testament times there were those who longed for Messiah's coming into the world, so there are those now, in other places of the earth, who desire his coming to them in the ordinances of his word and ministry, and in the blessings of his salvation. There are who are uttering the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," and who would be ready at once to welcome the messengers with the words, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that publish good tidings of peace!" And shall their cry and their desire be disregarded? There are multitudes, too, much greater multitudes, who have no desire, indeed, for

Christian privileges, but who have a longing desire for something which they can never find, for something to satisfy the restless cravings of the heart, who are panting to see and hear something which can give them rest. That something, though they know it not, is the gospel. For this the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. And shall we not reckon ourselves happy, if, by our exertions and prayers, we can do anything towards causing that gospel to be published to every creature under heaven, that men may be blessed in Jesus, and all nations call him blessed?

LECTURE LIV.

LUKE X. 25-37.

“ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27. And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus, answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

THOUGH there are two cases mentioned by Matthew and Mark, which are, in some respects, similar to the case of this lawyer, this interesting account is peculiar to Luke. A certain man who was a “*lawyer*,” or scribe, whose profession it was to study and expound the law of Moses, formally “*stood up*” in the midst of the people who were listening to Christ’s instructions, “*and tempted him;*” —put a question to him with the view of trying him, or proving him, and, perhaps, impiously and treacherously expecting that he would commit himself. But, taking it in the least offensive view, as simply a trying of Christ’s skill, with the view of showing off himself, the procedure of the lawyer, on this occasion, suggests useful cautions to all inquirers. How unbecoming and sinful, for example, is it to turn to the written word of Christ, not to learn from it, but to judge it! how unbecoming for the blind and erring creature to pretend to decide upon the skill of the all-wise and divine Prophet! Instead of being guilty of such presumptuous self-confidence, which can only lead to ruin, let us sit humbly at the feet of Jesus, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls. We here learn, too, that a good question may be put from a bad, or inadequate motive, and are reminded to attend to our motives, as well as to our words. Eternal life is a most important topic, and should be often spoken of, but it is not enough to speak of

it in any way. To converse and inquire about God and eternity, in a spirit of carelessness, disputatiousness, and captiousness, instead of being commendable and useful, is sinful and hurtful, and is a taking of God's name in vain.

Addressing Jesus by the appellation of "*Master*," or Teacher, whether with feigned or real respect, does not exactly appear, though he was well entitled to the name, as he was indeed "a Teacher sent from God;" the lawyer put this question to him, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*" There is nothing in the way in which this question is worded which would, of itself, have been sufficient to show the self-righteous spirit of its proposer, but we are plainly told afterwards that such was his spirit, and, therefore, we must keep it in view from the first. The word "do" does not necessarily imply the idea of doing with the view of establishing a meritorious claim to life, for it might be used in a very extensive sense, as implying both faith and holiness—whatever God requires, either as the means of acceptance, or as the way in which accepted persons are bound to walk. The Philippian jailer put this very similar question to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and they evidently considered it as a very proper question, put in a right spirit, and answered it in the sense referring to the means of acceptance, by saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In this case, however, our Lord, perceiving the character of the man, resolved to try the lawyer who came to try him, and referred the question back to him, saying, "*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*" The law, or word of God, is the only rule of faith and practice, and to it, in every case, the ultimate appeal should be made. As to this man, being himself a professed student and expounder of the law, he must have been expected to be well acquainted with it. To our Lord's question the lawyer replied, quoting in substance Deut. vi. 5, and Lev. xix. 18, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he (Jesus) said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.*"

It is, at the first glance, somewhat difficult to determine on what principle this passage ought to be interpreted, whether as chiefly teaching us the impossibility of being justified by the law, or as chiefly reminding us of the duty we owe to God and our neighbour. On mature consideration, I am inclined to think that a full, impartial, and faithful exposition requires that both of the ideas should be considered as pervading the whole. Taking what is afterwards said of this man's desire to justify himself in connexion with the words, "This do, and thou shalt live," we are immediately reminded that the law, as a covenant, requires perfect obedience, and that no mere man can ever render such obedience. Even in this view of the law as a covenant, the lawyer "answered right;" for he could not have given a more complete summary of its demands; and our Lord declared

that if he perfectly observed them, he should be saved. But these words of our Lord as plainly implied that, if the lawyer ever had already failed, or should hereafter fail, of perfect obedience, he could not obtain life from the law, but must be judged as a transgressor. This is exactly the view given by the apostle Paul, who reasons to prove that sinners cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, and then goes on to open up the only way of acceptance which is now practicable, namely, the way of free grace through faith in the righteousness of Christ. See Rom. iii. 19-25; Gal. iii. 10-14. Let us, then, mark this truth well. Let us not seek to be under the law as a covenant of works; for, if we will only hear the law, we shall hear it pronouncing sentence against us. When we consider how we have broken this holy, just, and good law, let us not seek to justify ourselves, but let us plead guilty before God, and cast ourselves on his mercy, by faith in the blood of his Son. Let us seek after righteousness, not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith.

At the same time, let none suppose that because sinners who have once broken the law must for ever despair of compensating for past sins, and of acquiring the divine favour by their own doings, and must have recourse to the gospel of grace, they may therefore be indifferent to the duties of piety and morality. Let none suppose that they may continue in sin because grace abounds. While the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, Christ brings us back to the duties of the law, though not for life, yet for direction. His people, though not perfectly conformed to the law, are yet renewed and sanctified, so as habitually to delight in it after the inward man, and to obey it in the outward conduct. The law—that is, the moral law—is the rule of their life. The scribe answered right, therefore, in this view also, when he gave this abridgment of duty. Our Lord himself gave a similar answer on a somewhat similar occasion, as we read in Matt. xxii. 35-40. In answer to the lawyer's question, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Lend a willing ear, then, while we now direct your attention to these two great commandments of the law.

First, *the duty of love to God*. And here we begin with observing, that there is no such principle as love to God in the heart of any man by nature, but that it is a principle *divinely implanted in the renewed hearts of believers*. Love to God constituted part of man's righteousness when he was in his original state of innocence; but, in rebelling against God, he forsook this his first love. Men are now described as "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" and as "enemies in their minds by wicked works." Without a renovation of mind, then, we can have no

love of God in us. This holy affection proceeds from God himself, being implanted and cherished in the soul by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Moses said,* “The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live:” and the apostle Paul teaches† that “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Nor is it to be overlooked, that the way in which the Holy Spirit produces this love is by bringing men to the knowledge and belief of the love of God manifested towards them through Jesus Christ. The belief of the gospel destroys the natural enmity of the mind, and causes us to “love God because he first loved us.”

Such is the origin of this principle, and when we consider its nature, we observe that it implies *a high esteem of God*. Love considers God as the most excellent of beings, as infinitely glorious, holy, and compassionate. It surveys, with admiration and delight, the bright display of his perfections in his works of creation and providence, but especially in the wonderful plan of redemption. It is the language of him who truly loves God, “Who in heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto thee? thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life.”

Love to God implies, also, an earnest *desire for communion with God, and the enjoyment of him*. The soul that loves God, sensible of its own indigence, and of the insufficiency of all earthly objects for its happiness, makes choice of him as its sure and everlasting portion. Unsatisfied with present attainments, it aspires to more full communion with God here, and to the perfect and endless enjoyment of him hereafter. Therefore, love to God vents itself in such language as this, “While many say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou on me the light of thy countenance.”—“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart fail: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

Observe, again, that true love to God is a *judicious* principle. It is not a blind, enthusiastic feeling, it is not a foolish fondness for an object whose excellence is not at all understood; but it is the result of the deliberate conviction of the understanding. Without this solid and rational foundation, it would degenerate into absolute enthusiasm; for, what is enthusiasm, but the baseless fabric of the imagination, or certain extravagant feelings not proceeding from any distinct, scriptural knowledge of their object? Hence Paul prayed for the Philippians, that their “love might abound, yet more and more, in all knowledge, and in all judgment.”

Further, love to God is an *active* principle. It is a fact that

* Deut. xxx. 6.

† Rom. v. 5.

here, as in common life, love produces a carefulness not to offend, but to please its object. But, what is peculiarly noticeable is, that the obedience which love produces is of the right kind. "This is the love of God," says John, "that we keep his commandments." The obedience of terror is the obedience of an enemy, and not of a friend—of a slave, and not of a willing servant or son. Such an obedience would not be esteemed by men, much less can it be esteemed by the searcher of hearts, who judges of all actions by the principles from which they proceed. But love is a principle which prompts, and sweetens to ourselves, our obedience, and at the same time, renders it acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ.

True love to God is also a *supreme* love. Our love is due to our fellow-creatures: but then, it must be properly suited to the nature of the ties which bind us, and always in due subordination to the love of God. "He that loveth father or mother more than me," says our Divine Redeemer, "is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Nay, the kind of love which is due to our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, does not belong, in any degree, to any creature, so that we are taught to consider love to God to be, in this sense, an exclusive principle. He must have our whole hearts. The required measure of this love is thus stated in the passage before us: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." I am not sure that much satisfaction could be given by criticisms on the particular words here chosen by our Lord, or that it is intended that we should look on them as furnishing any nice distinctions as to the powers of the mind. Perhaps, by the "heart" is meant chiefly the affections; by the "soul," either the immortal principle, or the principle of life; by the "strength," the intensity with which every power should be engaged; and by the "mind," the intellect or understanding. At all events, the general meaning of the passage is very obvious and very strong.* It is that love to God should engage all the faculties of our soul, and that in the highest degree of which they are susceptible.

Before leaving this topic, let me beseech you to consider whether you love the Lord God. Look inwards, to see on what your hearts are chiefly set; and look outwards, to see on what your strength is chiefly spent. It is to be feared that if Jesus were now to pronounce an opinion on some of you, he would have to say, as he did to certain Jews of old, "I know that ye have not the love of God in you." Consider how unreasonable, ungrateful, and sinful it is not to love the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings. Consider, too, that not to love God is to hate him, for there is here no medium. How dangerous is this! "If he whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward

* *Id petam, idque persequar corde, et animo, atque viribus.—Plautus.*

them that hate him." Let your thoughts turn to the love the Lord has already manifested towards you through his Son, and to the grace he is now ready to bestow on you: and may he bend your hearts into willing submission, and teach you to love his name.

"Ye that love the Lord hate evil." Beware of forming too strong an attachment to the perishing things of this world. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world: for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In order to keep alive, and more and more to cherish this noble principle, think much on the wonderful love of God, who remembered you in your low estate, and sent his well-beloved Son to bring you back to himself. Think much, too, of the gracious promises made to those who love God. "He will show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments."—"All things work together for good to them that love God."—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And think of the blissful state in which you shall have no more occasion to lament the coldness of your spiritual affections, but perfect love shall cast out fear, and you shall serve and enjoy your redeeming God for ever.

The love of God is "the first and great commandment:" but let us also consider, for a few minutes, "the second, which is like unto it, Thou shalt love *thy neighbour as thyself*."

This grace, too, like the foregoing, is a *divinely implanted* principle. There are, indeed, certain kindly feelings and certain acts of charity, to which man is prompted by common humanity, and what may be called natural instinct; but these are essentially different from the affections of the renewed mind, in which alone is to be found that true, pure, and enlightened love, which may be depended on, which is sufficiently comprehensive, and which is acceptable to God. Speaking of men's state by nature, the apostle Paul says, "We ourselves also were at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Selfishness is the chief characteristic of natural men; all of them "seek their own." Their very deeds of charity, which are good in their letter and in their effects, are polluted by the want of a regard to God. But Christian love to man comes in connexion with love to God, and with the new birth. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."—"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Let it ever be remembered that there can be no separation between true piety and this branch of true morality. Whoever observes the first table of the law, will observe the second also. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Adverting more particularly to the nature of this duty, we observe that loving our neighbour implies that we *entertain benevolent dispositions towards him*. Sincere, inward good-will is the first thing which this spiritual commandment requires. If love exists in this form, it is accepted of God, though a man may not have it in his power to evidence it by his actions: "For if there be first of all a willing mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." So likewise, if we secretly harbour ill-will to our neighbour, even though it should never break out into action, we are breakers of the law of love, and guilty in the sight of God.

Again, loving our neighbour implies that we *speak well of him*. "Speak not evil one of another," says the apostle James. We should not speak evil of any man without absolute necessity, even though what we say of him be true. This is not sufficiently attended to in the commonly received code of morality. Calumny, be it observed, consists, not only in spreading reports prejudicial to our neighbour which are false, but also in publishing, without just cause, and with an unkind disposition, his real faults. There are times, no doubt, when the whole truth must be spoken out, however much it may be against our neighbour; but the cause of justice and morality is but rarely promoted by speaking, even without malevolent intentions, against others in the common intercourse of life; and in no case are we free of sin if we proclaim their faults with a feeling of gratification. In fact, though it may seem paradoxical, truth is sometimes the greatest of all calumny. Love tries to conceal reports prejudicial to our neighbour. It imputes his faults, if it can, rather to inadvertence, than to habitual premeditated wickedness. "Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things."—"Charity covereth a multitude of sins:" and it embraces, with pleasure, the opportunity of publishing whatever may be to the honour or advantage of others. In a word, true love deals faithfully and closely with a man's faults, when it gets him by himself; but as tenderly as possible with them in the presence of others.

To this let it be added, that love to our neighbour implies that we *do him all the good offices in our power*. What avail professions without performance, when it is in our power to perform kind actions? "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Love requires that, according to our ability, we be "rich in good works ready to distribute, and willing to communicate."

In connexion, too, with the whole of this, we must remember that true love to our neighbour extends, not only to his temporal, but to his spiritual concerns, and is even more anxious for his salvation than for his outward good, because his eternal interests infinitely transcend his earthly.

Such is the general nature of the love here inculcated. It is subjoined, as an illustration of the manner, and as the standard according to which it should operate, that a man should love his neighbour as he loves himself. Self-love, properly regulated, is lawful, nay, incumbent. Reason and Scripture require that our temporal interest, and the welfare of our bodies, should not be neglected. "No" wise "man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." When, therefore, self-love is condemned, as, for example, when it is said that in the perilous times of the last days, "men shall be lovers of themselves," nothing more is meant than to condemn what we commonly call selfishness, which confines a man's cares to himself, and shuts out the love of God and of his neighbour. There is a proper self-love, a commendable concern for our own interest, which is here laid down as the model and standard of our love to others. Now, how does this proper self-love operate? It leads us to study to preserve our own rights—to be hurt by any unkindness shown to us—not to be soon angry with ourselves—not to put the worst construction on our own actions—not to publish our own disgrace—to apply to those who can relieve us in the time of distress—to be happy on account of our own success, and to be grieved by our own calamities; and, if we are under the influence of vital religion, our self-love leads us, above everything, to seek the prosperity of our own souls. In like manner, love to our neighbour should lead us to respect his rights—to treat him kindly—to bear with him—to be tender of his reputation—to help him in his poverty and affliction—and to pray, and do whatever else we can, for his salvation.

Let us consider whether we do indeed love our neighbour in this way. If we are negligent, let us be so no more. If we do, in some measure, attend to the duty, let us seek more and more to be "kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Let us be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us."

To proceed with the history before us:—our Lord commended, as to the letter of it, at least, the answer which the lawyer had given, and said, "*This do, and thou shalt live.*" If any man shall do this perfectly, he shall have a legal claim to life: and whoever shall do this habitually, and from proper motives, though not perfectly, then his obedience, though neither the ground, nor the means, of his justification, will show that he is on the way, and will indeed itself be the way, which leads to heaven.

"*But the lawyer willing,*" that is, wishing, "*to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*" He seems to have vainly felt as if he would have said, with a certain young man, in reference to the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up." He makes no further allusion, however,

to the first table of the law, or the love of God; either thinking that he could with more plausibility lay claim to the merit of having kept the second table, or judging himself absolutely perfect in piety to God by his observance of the legal ceremonies. But, with regard to the extent of the duty of benevolence, he put the question, "Who is my neighbour?"—holding himself, probably, the error which was so common among the Jews, namely, that their benevolence was due only to those who were of their own nation, or who had become proselytes. Now, this error was very inexcusable. The precept, in Lev. xix. 18, runs thus: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord." And, as if it were for the express purpose of preventing the bigoted limitation of the precept, it is added, in the 33d and 34th verses of the same chapter, "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." Still, many of the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, very unscripturally limited the precept in the way we have just stated. The following passages occur in the writings of a very learned Jew:—"An Israelite killing a stranger-inhabitant, he died not for it by the sanhedrim; because it is said, If any one lift up himself against his neighbour. And it is not necessary to say, He does not die upon the account of a Gentile; for they are not esteemed by them for their neighbour."—"The Gentiles, between whom and us there is no war, and so those that are keepers of sheep among the Israelites, and the like—we are not to contrive their death; but if they be in any danger of death, we are not bound to deliver them: for example, if any of them fall into the sea, you shall not need to take him out: for it is said, Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour: but such a one is not thy neighbour."* To counteract such uncharitable notions as these, and to meet the question, "Who is my neighbour?" as put by this lawyer, who was desirous of justifying himself, our Lord, "*answering*," or taking up the subject, spoke the parable, as it is commonly considered (though some incline to the opinion that it is a real history), of the good Samaritan.

"*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*" Jericho was a city in the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, about seven leagues from Jerusalem. A great many priests and Levites resided in Jericho—some say as many as twelve thousand; and, of course, some of them must have been almost constantly travelling to and from Jerusalem, whither they had to go to fulfil their course of service at the temple. There was a desert between these two cities, which, it is said, was much infested

* Quoted by Lightfoot from Maimonides.

with robbers.* The circumstances supposed to have happened, if they be only supposed, are, therefore, probable, and likely to have occurred. The man, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, must be supposed to have been a Jew himself; and, therefore, even on the narrowest interpretation of the law, was entitled to the sympathy of every Jew. As this Jew was on the way, "*he fell among thieves,*" or rather, robbers, "*who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*" What a proof is it of the exceeding depravity of man, that there have always been highwaymen, who, divesting themselves of every feeling of honesty and humanity, go out like natural beasts of prey, which are made to be taken and destroyed! While the poor man was lying on the road in this wretched plight, "*by chance*" † — that is, altogether undesignedly on the part of the creature, though every thing of the kind is arranged by the providence of God—" *there came down a certain priest that way,*" who, from his office and profession, might have been expected to have been peculiarly ready to every good work: "*but when he saw him,*" instead of stopping to examine him, and to help him, he immediately averted his eye, and "*passed by on the other side*" of the road. Then another man, who, though not of the family of Aaron, was of the tribe of Levi, "*when he was at the place, came*" (drew near), "*and looked on him;*" and though he could not have been ignorant of the woful state of the poor man, and though there was time for his eye to affect his heart, he was nevertheless steeled against the feelings of compassion, and, like the priest, he too "*passed by on the other side.*" No doubt, each of these unfeeling men had his excuse for this conduct, and said to himself, I have no time; or, I shall be brought to trouble and expense if I meddle; or, I am not called on to interfere: but, as they "*forbore to deliver him that was drawn unto death,*" He that pondereth the hearts would consider it, and mark it against them.‡ Those who are employed in sacred offices have been often, like others, unfeeling and unkind; nay, when their minds are blinded by avarice and bigotry, they become the most griping and most persecuting of men: this is a great scandal to the cause they profess to espouse. The true servants of God, however, are of a very different spirit; and many of them have displayed the greatest generosity and self-denial.

* Adamim (Adummim) quondam villula, nunc ruinæ, in sorte tribus Judæ, qui locus usque hodie vocatur Maledowim, et Græce dicitur ἀναβασίς πυγγών, Latine autem appellari potest ascensus ruforum, sive rubentium, propter sanguinem qui illic crebro a latronibus funditur. Est autem confinium tribus Judæ et Benjamin descendentibus ab Aelia Hierichum, ubi et castellum militum situm est ob auxilia viatorum.—*Hieronymus De locis Hebraicis*. Thus, the road referred to in this parable was of equally bad reputation in the days of Jerome, who was born about the year 329, as it appears to have been at the time the parable was spoken.

† Κατὰ συντυχίαν. It happened by coincidence of time and other circumstances.

‡ General and great as is the cruelty which characterizes heathenism, many of the heathens themselves will rise up in judgment against such bigotry and cruelty on the part of the professed worshippers of the true God. Herodotus says of the Assyrians,

At last "*a certain Samaritan*"—one of the people with whom the Jews had no friendly dealings, and whom they utterly despised—"as he journeyed, came where" the wounded Jew "*was*" lying; "*and when he saw him,*" rising above every narrow sentiment, and allowing his sympathy free scope, "*he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine,*" either separately, or rather, beaten up together as an ointment, to cleanse and heal; "*and set him on his own beast,*" as he was unable to walk, "*and*" "*holding him on,*" "*brought him to an inn;*"* "*and*" there "*took care of him,*" that he should be refreshed, and properly lodged for the night. We may here notice, in passing, the use and the abuse of inns:—their use, when they are kept only where really needed, and resorted to by travellers, for necessary refreshment and lodging, and by persons who have business to transact which requires some such accommodation; thus, Jacob's sons stopped at an inn, on their way back to Canaan, and Joseph and Mary resorted to the inn, on their arrival at Bethlehem:—their abuse, when they are multiplied solely for the sake of gain and to entrap the unwary, and when they are frequented for idleness and intemperance, as is but too much the case at the present day.

The next morning, when the Samaritan found it necessary to leave the inn, he gave the landlord, for the poor man, "*two pence,*" or two denarii. The Roman *denarius* was about sevenpence half-penny of our money; and, when it is considered how much greater the value of money was in ancient times than now, it must appear that fifteenpence of our money was the full amount of the expense already incurred. Probably, the Samaritan did not carry much money with him, both because less was needed when it was usual for travellers to carry provisions along with them, and also because, having to travel by so dangerous a road, "*it would have been imprudent to charge himself with much more money than he was likely to want in his journey.*"† But, in departing, he directed the landlord to take all possible care of the wounded stranger, and assured him that whatever additional cost or trouble might be incurred, he would discharge when he came back.

This beautiful account made its way to the conviction of the judgment of the lawyer, in spite of all his pride and prejudice: for when our Lord asked him which of the three, the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan, was "*neighbour,*" that is, acted the neighbourly and friendly part to the man who had fallen among the robbers, though the lawyer would not condescend to say expressly, "*The Samaritan,*" he replied to that effect—"He that showed mercy on him." As for the lawyer himself, who thought that he perfectly obeyed the law of love, and merited heaven by "*It is unlawful for them to pass by in silence any person in distress, without first inquiring what is the matter with him.*" Συγῆ δὲ παρῆλθον τοῦ καμνοντος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔβαν, πρὶν ἂν ἐπιρρηται ἡντινα νοσον ἔχη.—Lib. i.

* πανδοχεῖον, a place for receiving all.

† Doddridge.

his obedience, this parable showed him that, by limiting the precept of love, he entirely misunderstood it, and, therefore, violated it, and was condemned by it.

Not for the benefit, however, of this lawyer only was this parable spoken, but for the benefit of all who should ever read or hear it. Let us also learn from it *the folly of attempting to justify ourselves on the ground of our benevolence*. There are, probably, none of us who have not, at times, felt and exhibited some kindness to our fellow-creatures; but who among us has acted up to the precept of charity, so as never to have broken it? Who has always been so ardent and unlimited in this duty as he ought? who has loved his neighbour as himself? nay, who has not been conscious, at times, of the very opposite sentiments and conduct? Let us all again plead guilty here, and have recourse to God for pardon through his Son. Let us "believe in Jesus Christ, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

But, if we have improved this parable to humble us, and to lead us to God for salvation by grace, then we are rightly prepared to improve it also as suggesting to us a most beautiful *illustration and example of true benevolence*. "Go and do thou likewise," said Jesus to the scribe; and so he says to each of us. Let us, theoretically and practically, adopt the extended and noble view of benevolence which this parable opens up. Let us regard every man as our neighbour, and as entitled to our sympathy and assistance, who is in any way brought near to us, and within the reach of our observation or knowledge. Let us not confine our love to a select few, whose ideas and habits are so much our own, that our love to them is only "self-love reflected." Let us never imagine that distinctions of nation or sect, or politics or customs, are to be allowed to shut up our bowels of compassion. Let not even the existence of enmity on the part of any, prove an exception to the rule. In the words of Christ: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And, when we have adopted this rule in theory, let us be on our guard against the various excuses which, when calls on our compassion actually present themselves, harden us against them, and cause us, as it were, to pass by on the other side. If we cannot meet every demand, let us not fail, in what appears to us to be the most judicious and effectual way, to do our utmost to alleviate the various bodily and spiritual distresses of our fellow-creatures.

As to the illustration which goes on the idea that, in this parable, our Lord intended by the robbed and wounded Jew to represent fallen man, and by the good Samaritan himself—all judicious interpreters justly exclaim against it as erroneous. At the same time, without supposing that this is the primary inten-

tion, we may illustrate and enforce this particular duty of benevolence as it is here taught, by the example of Christ, just as we are accustomed to illustrate and enforce many other duties by that example. In a much more pitiable condition than that of this poor man on the highway, lies the sinner who is robbed of his Maker's image and of all good, cruelly wounded by Satan, dead in trespasses and sins, and ready to die eternally: and far more kind than the good Samaritan is Jesus Christ, who, forgetting the enmity the sinner bears to him, has compassion on him, pours into his wounds the balm of his own blood, takes on him the whole expense of his cure, and provides everything necessary for his safety and comfort. While we admire every striking instance of compassion in a fellow-creature, let us far more admire this matchless grace of the Redeemer. Let us mark how nobly he exemplifies his own precept, and let his love be the pattern of ours.

In conclusion, then, my friends, let us, by all this, be admonished, and encouraged to yield our hearts to all the kindness of Christian sympathy, and our hands to all the activity of Christian charity. If it be still inquired, What is love to our neighbour?—It is love to every human being, flowing from love to God. It is the inward workings, and the external outgoings, of the renewed affections towards man. It is to give to the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and the prisoners, to protect helpless infancy, to bear the burden of the aged, to instruct the ignorant, to warn the careless, to encourage the pious, and to comfort those who mourn. It is to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. In short, it is, in connexion with the glory of God, to live chiefly for the benefit of others. Such is that love which is delightful in its exercise, blessed in its effects, pure, unbounded, heaven-born, everlasting. Love is the greatest of the Christian graces. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Faith is the root, and hope is the blossom; but charity, or love, is the fruit. Faith and hope are like two months in spring, charity is the long-dayed summer. Faith and hope are stars of the morning, charity is the full-blazing sun. Faith and hope fail at last, but "charity never faileth." Faith and hope are two wings, every feather of which sparkles like burnished gold and diamonds—they are the two wings which raise us to heaven; but there we must drop them. Faith and hope are two faithful companions, who guide and comfort us in our way through the wilderness, and who will attend us to the very gates of paradise; but there we shall bid them adieu. Faith will be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment; but love will enter in with us through the gate into the heavenly city, and continue to engage and bless us throughout the endless ages of eternity. Now therefore, let us studiously cherish this first of graces: and may the Holy Spirit teach us to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves."

LECTURE LV.

LUKE X. 38-42.

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; 42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

It is now proposed, in a dependence on divine strength, to consider the history and the general meaning of this passage; to expand the view which it gives of the salvation of the soul as the one thing needful, and the good part which shall not be taken away; and to conclude with some improvement of the whole.

Let us, in the first place, *consider the history and general meaning of this passage.*

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house.” In one of the journeys which our Lord took in the gracious work of his ministry, accompanied by his disciples, he entered into a certain village. We are sure that the village was Bethany, for we read in the beginning of the 11th chapter of John, that Lazarus, who was sick, was of “Bethany, the town of Mary, and her sister Martha.” This village was situated fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, to the east of Jerusalem. The house into which Jesus was received was called Martha’s house, probably because she being the eldest, or perhaps a widow, it was more properly her house than that of Mary or of Lazarus. The Son of God, though the Creator and Lord of all, for our sakes became poor, and condescended to be indebted, if we may so speak, to the benevolence of his own creatures. On this occasion, Martha manifested commendable hospitality in receiving into her house, not only Jesus himself, but, as we may gather from his usual habits, at least the twelve disciples also, who were now his constant attendants. So Christians in general should, according to their ability, exercise hospitality. If they are ready almost to envy Martha the pleasure and honour of having Christ and his apostles for her guests, let them not neglect to avail themselves of those gracious spiritual visits of which he speaks, when he says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I wil

come in to him and sup with him, and he with me ;” and let them be also disposed to welcome his people for his sake. But there was even danger to these disciples in receiving Jesus into their house, now that he was denounced by the rulers ; this pious family, therefore, now manifested a holy boldness worthy of perpetual imitation. Let us never be afraid, or ashamed, to acknowledge Christ and his people.

No sooner had Christ entered into the house, than he began to instruct those who were in it in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God—a lesson to us to study to improve our seasons of social intercourse for our spiritual edification. Martha’s sister, Mary, being exceedingly desirous to profit by the opportunity, and to miss nothing of what Jesus was saying, remained close by him : she “*sat at his feet and heard his word.*” According to the usual custom in the East, the teacher seems to have sat on a chair, or elevated seat, while his scholars were seated on the floor, or on mats ; in this position, they were lower than he, and might literally be said to sit at his feet. Hence, the expression to have sat at the feet, or to have been brought up at the feet, of any one, signified having been his scholar. Thus, Paul says, in Acts xxii. 3, that he was “brought up” in Jerusalem, “at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.” Whether this attitude was always preserved by the Jewish scholars, or not,* there can be no doubt that Mary now sat at Jesus’ feet, as an humble and most attached disciple. Let us imitate her example, in this respect ; that is, let us figuratively sit at Christ’s feet, by listening to his word with deep composure, close attention, docility, submission, and affection.

“*But Martha was cumbered about much serving.*” Being extremely solicitous to furnish a great entertainment for Jesus and those who were with him, she was “cumbered,” literally distracted,†—drawn different ways—perplexed and harassed—

* Vitranga (De Synag. lib. i.) produces various authorities from Jewish writers to show that the scholars of the rabbins stood before them, and thence argues that to be brought up at their feet did not express a particular attitude, but intimated, more generally, the being educated near them, or with them, or under them. He seems to have succeeded in proving that their scholars sometimes stood ; but he does not prove that they always stood. There are opposing Jewish authorities in favour of the sitting, or rather, squatting, posture : and, whatever, according to the ordinary process of language, may have been the general way of employing the phrase at last, his reasoning is not sufficient to overthrow the commonly received opinion that the origin of the phrase is to be found in the attitude which it literally expresses.—This was the very attitude of Socrates and his disciples, during the hours of instruction, as represented by Plato in his Phædo : *Ἐν ἧν γὰρ καθημινος ἐν δεξιά αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ χαμαιζήλου τινος, ὃ δὲ ἐπὶ πολλὰ ὑψηλοτέρου ἢ ἐγώ.* As illustrative of this, Buxtorf says that, in giving an advice to any one to become a disciple of their rabbins, the Jews used to say, “*Pulveriza te pulvere pedum sapientum—Dedust thyself with the dust of the feet of the wise men.*” See also Deut. xxiii. 3, and Luke viii. 35.

† *Περὶ σπαστο.* Epictetus tells the man who is professing to study the improvement of his mind, and yet very much taken up with external things, that he shall neither possess the one nor the other, being distracted, or divided, between both, *Ὅστις τούτοις ἔχει δυν’ ἑκείνῃ, περισπωμένος ἐπ’ ἀμφοτέρω.*—Dissert. iv. 10. As the apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. vii. 35, we should “attend upon the Lord without distraction,” *ἀταρακταί.*

having so many things to attend to, that she was at a loss to which to turn first. Now, we must neither go to the extreme of supposing Martha, from anything that is here said, to have been a careless, or worldly person, nor must we look on her as altogether free of blame on this occasion. We have abundant evidence that Martha was a true believer. When we look to the 11th chapter of John, we find it said that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus:" and we find her giving plain proof of her faith in Jesus, and conducting herself in a manner superior to Mary; for, while Mary sat still in the house, "Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him, and said, Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." And when he put the question to her if she believed, she said, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world." After that, Mary also came out, and fell down at Jesus' feet, weeping. In short, on that very trying occasion, while both the sisters conducted themselves well, they discovered a diversity of temper: Martha had much faith and much good feeling, joined with great activity and strength of mind; Mary gave way to feelings which, for a time, quite overpowered her. It is true that if, as is probable, the death and resurrection of Lazarus took place at a later period than the circumstance related in the passage before us, Martha may be supposed to have improved considerably in every Christian grace by that time; yet much that is commendable appears in her conduct on the present occasion. We have already noticed the excellent spirit she manifested in receiving Jesus with his attendants into her house. Now we see the care she took to have everything in good order; and there can be no doubt that in all the trouble she took, she was influenced chiefly by love and respect to Christ. To a certain extent, then, her conduct here was good, and worthy of imitation. But there was here also something that was culpable; for she was not contented with serving, but was cumbered with serving, and with much serving. She was too ambitious to provide a great feast; in which, if she was not influenced, in some degree by vanity, she at least mistook or forgot the character of Christ, as if he had been one who would have been gratified by show and luxury. By this conduct, she also deprived herself of reaping benefit from the Saviour's instructions. Surely, less care might have sufficed, especially if, as there is reason to suppose from the respect in which the family was held, she had servants to execute her directions. Besides, she was not contented to be cumbered, and deprived of privileges herself alone, but she desired to have her sister cumbered and deprived also; for she came to Jesus, "*and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me.*" Thus, it sometimes happens that those who are much more worldly than Martha was, groundlessly

accuse their pious friends of neglecting their temporal affairs. It is quite true that pious persons should give no just cause for any such imputation, but should, on the contrary, be most conscientiously attentive to the business of life, and thus cut off occasion of speaking reproachfully of them. At the same time, it often happens that the dislike of worldly friends and acquaintances to genuine religion causes them to speak of the interference of religious duties with worldly concerns, where there is no interference, and to impute neglect of business where there is no such neglect. What use could there be for Mary also being deprived of this opportunity? Surely it was enough that Martha was absent to take the management of the house. Besides, with all the regard Martha undoubtedly had for Christ, this was spoken very indiscreetly: it was, in fact, a reflection on him as being careless, and as paying no attention to her comfort. It was something like the conduct of the disciples who came to Christ, and awoke him, during the storm, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Let us beware of the impiety of ascribing forgetfulness, or want of kindness, to him who is ever ready to help us, and who is far more concerned for our welfare than we are ourselves.

This interference brought on Martha her Lord's decided, though gentle, rebuke; for "*he answered and said unto her,*" addressing her kindly, yet solemnly, twice by name, "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.*" The great variety of preparations she was making, filled her with anxiety, fretted her, and put her out of humour. "*But one thing is needful.*" There are some respectable authorities* for understanding our Lord as saying that only one dish was necessary. The meaning, however, commonly affixed to the clause, is not only more important in itself, but more directly suggested by the context: for, the "one thing needful," is contrasted with the "many things," not only in number, but in kind, and was what Martha was, for the time, in some degree neglecting for the sake of these many things; and what could that be but the salvation of her soul? And this is exactly the conclusion to which we are led by the sequel, in which our Lord says, "*And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her;*" evidently meaning that Mary was, by her conduct at the time, showing, in a peculiarly striking way, that she had chosen for her part, or portion, spiritual and eternal blessings—in other words, grace and glory, or religion as the means, and heaven as the end. Dr Doddridge thus happily paraphrases these two verses: "And Jesus, in reply, said to her, O Martha, Martha, thou art over anxious, and disturbed with restless agitation of spirit, about many things which are not worth so much solicitude, and might well have been spared on such an occasion as this. But let me tell thee, my dear friend, that there is one thing absolutely necessary, and of in-

* Theophylact, Basil, Dr Ad. Clark, &c.

finitely greater importance than any of these domestic and secular cares: even the care to have the soul instructed in the saving knowledge of the way that leads to eternal life, and to secure a title to it; and Mary is wisely attending to that: therefore, instead of reproving her, I must rather declare, that she has chosen what may eminently be called the good part, which, as it shall not be finally taken away from her, I would not now hinder her from pursuing, but rather invite thee to join with her in her attention to it, though the circumstances of our intended meal should not be so exactly adjusted as thy fond friendship could desire."

Such are the history and the general meaning of this very simple, but very beautiful and instructive occurrence. Let me now, as proposed, in the second place, *expand the view here given of religion, or the salvation of the soul, as the one thing needful, and the good part which shall not be taken away.*

Religion, or attention to the soul's salvation, is here said, first, to be *the one thing needful*. It is one thing. Though consisting of various graces, and pursued in the use of various means, still there is a unity in itself, and a unity in all who embrace it. There is no harmony in those pursuits which relate exclusively to the world. They are constantly jarring; and the prosecution of one favourite object is almost sure to interfere with another. But as to true religion all is consistent, and progress in any one grace causes progress in every other. In reference to this, believers are said to be "all one in Christ Jesus;" and Paul says to them, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Further, the care of the soul is not only "one thing," but is *the* one thing by way of eminence; that is, it is, or ought to be, the great business of life; it is a concern in comparison of which all other concerns, however important, are trifling. It is the one thing *needful*—that is, necessary. Various things are, indeed, necessary in a lower sense, and for inferior ends. *Food* and *raiment* are called necessities of life; and, of course, various labours are to be undergone to procure them. There are many things desirable, too, which are not necessary, even in the lower sense, such as riches, honour, and health. But the welfare of the soul must be viewed, by all who form a proper estimate of the real and relative value of things, as necessary in the highest sense of the word—as necessary to their safety and happiness, as necessary beyond comparison, above every thing else. *Riches* are desirable in common estimation, and may be turned to good account, but they are not necessary to a man's happiness; for the believer, though poor in this world's goods, is "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom;" and "the law of God's mouth is better to him than thousands of gold and silver." *Honour* is desirable, but not necessary, even in the lower sense; for he who is un-

justly despised by men, may be precious, honourable, and beloved in God's sight now, and crowned with glory, honour, and immortality hereafter. Even those things which are called the necessities of life, are by no means necessary in the strongest sense of the word; for, though they are generally given to God's people, some believers have been, for good reasons, destitute of them, and yet were patient, nay, joyful, at the time; and surely, those things are seen by them not to have been necessary, now that they are in glory. Paul said that he had been "in perils" often, "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;" but he spake of these deprivations with triumph when he was on earth, and now they are all forgotten by him, or remembered only to enhance the blessedness of his eternity. Let certain things be called necessities, if men please, but let them remember that the time is coming when, even in the lowest sense, they shall be necessities no more. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." The bread of life is necessary in a far higher sense than the bread that perisheth. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," said Christ. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," said Job. *Health* of body is very desirable, as being that without which other merely earthly sources of pleasure are unavailing; but, it is not necessary: for, on the contrary, its deprivation has often proved one of the greatest of blessings to the soul, and while the body has been decaying, the inward man has been renewing day by day, and that spiritual health has been establishing which is a preparation for the country in which the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick." Nay, highly desirable as is *life* itself, temporal life, it is not necessary to happy existence. Were it so, the possibility of continued happiness would be cut off from men, for very soon they must all die. There is another kind of life, however, which is necessary to happiness—the new life, which is begun on earth, and perfected in heaven. This is the one thing needful. This life of holiness is necessary to our ultimate safety and happiness; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." An interest in Christ by faith, accompanied with the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, is so necessary, that without it, all other advantages are but of momentary and trifling importance; and with it, all disadvantages are light, and will soon come to an end. Those who have this have all that is necessary; they have enough: they are safe and happy, "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold they live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

But, the salvation of the soul, or an interest in the blessings of the gospel, is here further described as "*the good part that shall*

not be taken away." It is the "part," that is, the portion, or inheritance, or possession of believers. The Lord said to Aaron, as representing the Levites,* "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance." But, in the most important, that is, the spiritual sense, the Levites were the representatives of all true believers, who have God for their portion, and who find in him all that is necessary for time and for eternity. As for all unbelieving and unconverted men, who are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, it may be said of them, as it was of Simon the sorcerer, that they have "neither part nor lot in this matter." The part of Christ's people is indeed a *good* part or portion. Have not they a good part who are "partakers of the heavenly calling"—"partakers of the divine nature," "partakers of God's holiness," "partakers of Christ," "partakers of the Holy Ghost;" and all this as rendering them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Surely, every one of them may say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage." This part, or portion, believers are said to have *chosen*—God having first chosen them, they are enabled to choose him. They voluntarily and heartily fix on him and spiritual blessings as their portion. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever," says the Psalmist, "for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "I cried unto the Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." And what crowns the excellence of this portion is, that it is *never taken away*† from those who become possessed of it. Of how short duration, at the very utmost, is the portion of the men of the world who "have their portion in this life!" Frequently, it forsakes them, even during their lifetime; at all events, they leave it behind them when they die. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever;" but all is evanescent. Though such a man be made rich, and the glory of his house increased, "when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him" into the grave. Whosoever hath an interest in this good part, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; "but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." When God shall say to the fool—that is, to the ungodly man—"This night thy soul shall be required of

* Numb. xviii. 20.

† Hierocles, in his Commentary on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, says, that if we are possessed of the virtuous habit, it is not in the power of any man, however anxious, to deprive us of it, 'Οὐκ ἔστιν ἰστί τῇ βουλευμένῃ ταύτῃ ἡμᾶς ἀποσῆσαι. Cicero says: "If a happy life can be lost it cannot be happy;" and again, "While all other things are uncertain, fading, and movable, virtue alone is fixed with very deep roots, so that she can never by any violence be overthrown, or removed from her place." Si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest. Quanquam omnia alia incerta sunt, caduca, mobilia, virtus est una altissimis defixa radicibus: quæ nunquam ulla vi labefactari potest, nunquam dimoveri loco."—*De Fin.* lib. ii. et *Philip.* iv.

thee;" then whose shall those things be which he hath provided? Nor are the people of God any more secure of retaining a worldly portion. They may be stripped of all that in their outward possessions and connexions is naturally desirable; but having chosen the good part, that is, a lasting portion, enables them to rejoice under the heaviest losses. This enables them to say, with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Of whatever else they may be deprived, they cannot be deprived of this portion. "Your hearts shall rejoice," says Jesus to his own, "and your joy no man taketh from you." And, instead of being losers, they are great gainers by death; for they have treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through to steal: there they have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It is the language of each of them: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside thee. My heart and flesh shall fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Blessed are the people who are in such a case—blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. Theirs is a good part indeed, for everything needful is, and eternally shall be, theirs. "All things are theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

And now, in the third place, as to the more express improvement of the subject:

1. This passage suggests important *cautions as to domestic, and all worldly affairs*. Even pious persons are far from being beyond the need of admonition on this point; nay, some of them stand very much in need of it. The difficulty here is to pursue the proper medium—to pay sufficient attention to these matters, and yet not to carry that attention to an excessive and hurtful length. It would, no doubt, have been wrong to have neglected to make suitable preparation to entertain the Saviour and his attendants on this occasion; but it seems as if that could have been accomplished by Martha, without her being so cumbered and careful, and troubled about many things; and it was wrong to propose to deprive her sister of the privilege she so highly valued. On the one hand, then, let all needful attention be paid by the pious mistresses of families to have every thing in their houses in a judicious, orderly, and comfortable state, according to the station of life in which they are placed; and let them conscientiously avoid all indolent, careless, and slovenly habits, as they would avoid bringing a scandal on their profession, and prejudicing the worldly against it. In describing the virtuous woman, Solomon says, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." On the other hand, this care must not be carried to excess; it must not be the

chief business; it ought to be managed so as not to interfere with, but to promote, the one thing needful. One breach of duty, in consequence of excessive domestic care, occurs when it is the means of preventing secret and family worship altogether, or of impeding their regular and calm exercise; and this is very similar to the situation to which Martha now reduced herself. Another sinful error, in this respect, is that of giving or requiring from servants more time and attention to the preparation of food, and to other family concerns, on the Lord's-day, than is necessary. Conscientious attention should be paid to this, in order that all may have leisure for religious exercises at home, and that no members of the family may be detained, or absent themselves, from any of the ordinary diets of public worship, without such reason as comes fairly under the designation of necessity or mercy. She is the commendable mistress of a family, who keeps every thing in good order, without depriving herself or household of leisure to use the means of grace; and who shows hospitality without grudging, yet without vanity or extravagance. And he is the commendable man of business, who, while he is "not slothful in business," is, at the same time, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Excessive and hurtful care is by no means confined to household matters: it characterizes many a man in the whole of his occupation, and accompanies him to his farm, or to his merchandise. Let it be held as a bounden duty that every man should pay attention to his own lawful business; for the Psalmist, among other characteristics of "a good man," mentions that "he will guide his affairs with discretion:" but let it also be ever remembered that there is something of still more importance, even the salvation of the soul, and that whatever may be the calls which are made on a man's time and attention, he must not be so cumbered and troubled by them, as to neglect the one thing needful, but must have a mind composed and ready to turn to God, and pursue all earthly objects in subserviency to religion. Let all who have any regard for their souls, practically attend to the following warnings and directions. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—"Take no thought," no excessive, distrustful, and sinful thought, "saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—"Labour not," that is, comparatively, "for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."—"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

2. Improve this passage as *a test of your state and character*. Inquire whether you be living as really, and habitually, and practically, feeling that the only thing worth while of living for is the salvation of your souls. Enter into your thoughts, review your lives, and say in what direction has your care chiefly lain? If you are conscious that you are chargeable with gross neglect of the means of salvation, your case is quite clear. But it is not enough to have paid some slight and heartless attention to these means, and to have done some, or even many things according to the letter of the law: all this and more may be true, and yet it may be said, "One thing thou lackest." Ask yourselves, What has had the chief place in your thoughts—the world and its cares, or Christ and his salvation? It is quite possible for you to know this: nay, many of you must know it, and do know it, if you would only confess it, and follow out your conviction. Ask of God what you are chiefly seeking—ask it of the Word of God, ask it of your own consciences. Happy are those of you who, amid all your imperfections, are yet following after salvation as the one thing needful, and have chosen the good part which shall never be taken away from you. Is not each of you ready to say with Jeremiah, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him?" Be admonished to prosecute still more zealously this first of objects, this one thing. Count not yourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is to be feared, however, that there are many of you who are not minding the things which belong to your peace: let me, then,

3. Beseech you to *consider the folly, guilt, and danger of neglecting* the one thing needful, and the good portion. Make the supposition as favourable as possible; but, however profitable and gratifying in other respects, your labour may have been, as it has not been directed towards the one thing needful, and the good part, there is no solid, no lasting advantage, or pleasure, in it: "For, what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" You have positively lost your time and your trouble; and, for any good ultimately to result from your toil, you may be said to have been mere idlers. The very pains you have taken in reference to religion are lost, because you have not been hearty in it. Nay, you are not only losing your time and labour, but you are busied in ruining yourselves for ever. You are adding sin to sin; you are laying plans (strange to tell!) to impoverish yourselves! and you are heaping up mountains of difficulties in the way of your true happiness. How foolish, and how sinful! You are neglecting your souls, from your leading too busy a life. No doubt, some of you have been heard to plead the great press of business, as an excuse for such negligence. But it is no sufficient excuse; it is neither

satisfactory to reason now, nor will it be sustained at the bar of God at last. How dangerous, too, such neglect, and such a choice! If you find yourselves at last without the one thing, the only thing needful to your safety, how inevitable must be your ruin! You must at last have one of two portions; if you have not the good part, or portion, you must have the bad. "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup:" they "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Remember, too, that your disappointment and ruin will be the same, whether you are successful in your worldly schemes or not. It is neither success nor failure as to worldly prosperity; but the mind's bent, that marks the character.

Lastly, Let me earnestly *urge you all to make Mary's choice*. Martha did not neglect this, it is true; but Mary was peculiarly distinguished for it, and therefore, it is usually called Mary's choice. The Lord is now saying to you, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" he is "setting before you life and death, the blessing and the curse;" see, then, that, in his strength, you choose him for your God and portion, and with him, life and the blessing. Seek after this good part in the diligent use of the private and public means of grace, especially, in waiting on God in his sanctuary. Say, with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Seek this good part too, in the way of the belief of the gospel. Remember that you can obtain it only by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ—only by being justified in his righteousness, and renewed by his Spirit. "If I wash thee not," says he, "thou hast no part with me." By receiving him, however, you will receive everything else along with him. All other gifts come with the "unspeakable gift." He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for you all, how shall he not with him also freely give you all things? We urge you to this choice by the consideration of its common neglect. It is the many who say, "Who will show us any good?" and the few whose leading wish is that God may lift on them the light of his countenance. Instead of making religion their chief business, most desire as little of it as possible, and are studious to put it out of the way of their every-day employment. Mark their conversation even on the Lord's-day; and is not that demonstrative that they are of the world? Mark how, with the name of Christians, they yet dislike all decision of Christian principle and conduct; and is that not conclusive of their state? Come out from among them, then, and be not conformed to them. We urge you to this choice by the unsatisfactory and transitory nature of all merely earthly good. It remains that all the relations and employments of time be as if they were not, for the fashion of the world passeth away. Will

you set your hearts on that which is not ? for surely, riches make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven. We urge you to this choice by the noble and enduring nature of the blessings which it brings ; for they are indeed large as your wishes, and lasting as eternity. And we urge this choice upon you by the plea of necessity. This is not a matter of indifference ; this is not a part which you may choose or refuse, and in either case be safe ; but necessity, absolute necessity, lies on you, if you are to have the smallest regard to your interest. Let, then, this necessity prevail with you. Necessity does wonders. Necessity is the mother of invention. Necessity overcomes apparently insurmountable difficulties. But what necessity can at all compare with this—the necessity of escaping from endless misery, and of securing endless happiness ? Now, then, let what *must* be done *be* done. Awake, and bestir yourselves ! Away, and betake yourselves to the mercy of God through the Redeemer ; and begin to live for eternity. May the Lord enable you to make the care of your souls your great concern, and to choose the good part which shall never be taken away from you. If this be attended to, all will be well : if this be neglected, all will be lost.

LECTURE LVI.

LUKE XI. 1-4.

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread. 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”

“PRAYER is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.”* Prayer is reasonable, incumbent, pleasant, and profitable. This duty comes to us recommended by the example of our Saviour. As God, he was prayed to; but, as man, he prayed to his heavenly Father. We read of him praying at his baptism, in the wilderness, and at his transfiguration; we read of his going out into a mountain to pray, of his being alone praying; and here we read of his “*praying in a certain place*,” most probably along with his disciples. As soon as he had “*ceased*,” for they would not interrupt him during so solemn an exercise, “*one of his disciples*”—who it was we are not told, but one of them, in name of the whole—“*said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray*.” This was, in itself, an excellent prayer; and it is a prayer which we should often adopt. It is a difficult duty to pray well, and we have much need to pray that the Lord would teach us to pray by his Spirit, and from his word. “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” In reference both to the proper spirit, and the proper matter of prayer, it becomes us to say, “Lord teach us to pray.”—“Teach us what we shall say unto thee, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.”

Though not to the exclusion of the more spiritual view, the disciples appear to have here chiefly intended to express a desire that Christ would give them some specific directions as to the matter and manner of prayer. We know that John’s disciples were peculiarly distinguished for fasting and prayer—that is, probably, frequent prayers; for, we are told by Luke, in the 5th chapter, 33d verse, that Christ’s disciples “said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and like-

* Shorter Catechism.

wise the disciples of the Pharisees ; but thine eat and drink ?" We have no particular account, however, of the way in which John proceeded in instructing his disciples in prayer ; and, therefore, we are not certain what may have been the exact meaning of the request of Christ's disciples that he would teach them to pray "as John taught his disciples : " we are not certain whether they wished an exact form of words, or general directions. However this may have been, the instructions he gave embody both a form and a general model. Instead of giving them, however, a form and model entirely new, he gave them very much the same as what he formerly introduced in his sermon on the mount. What we call The Lord's Prayer is thus introduced, in Matthew : "After this manner, therefore, pray ye"—a mode of expression which leads us to think of what follows, rather as a pattern to be imitated in its general substance and manner in all our prayers, than as particular words which we are expressly enjoined to use. But here it is introduced thus : "*When ye pray, say,*" which is an injunction to use the very words. And yet, when we compare the passages in the two evangelists together, we find several variations in the words employed ; and, in Luke, the conclusion, or doxology, is omitted altogether : which circumstances seem to leave considerable latitude as to the words.

As to the use which ought now to be made of the Lord's Prayer, there seem to be two extremes—the very frequent and unmeaning repetition, and even the constant use of it, on the one hand ; and the refusing, or neglecting to use it altogether, on the other. The Romanists are taught to repeat it again and again, as if the efficacy of it depended, in part at least, on the number of times it is repeated, which they have an artificial contrivance for counting and marking.* Than this it is difficult to conceive a more direct contravention of the chief reason why, according to Matthew, Christ would have his disciples to pray after that manner, namely, that they might not use "vain repetitions."† Nor is there any good reason for holding that it

* The rosary, or string of beads.

† Matt. vi. 7 : "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." *Μη βαρβολογῆτε*, from one Battus, who was remarkable for a verbose and tautological style. Wakefield remarks, that "a frequent repetition of awful and striking words may be the result of earnestness and fervour ; but great length of prayer, which will, of course, involve much sameness and idle repetition, naturally creates fatigue and carelessness in the worshipper, and seems to suppose ignorance, or inattention in the Deity—a fault against which our Lord more particularly wishes to secure them." The same author illustrates this point by the following quotation from Terrence :—

"Ohe ! jam desine deos, uxor, gratulando obtundere,
Tuam esse inventam gnatam : nisi illos ex tuo ingenio judicas,
Ut nil credas intelligere, nisi idem dictum sit centies."

"Now, cease, wife, from stunning the gods with thanksgivings that thy daughter is found ; unless thou judgest of them from thy own disposition, and believest that they do not understand anything, unless it be told a hundred times."—The priests of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 26), "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us ! But there was no voice, nor any that answered." Then Elijah said ironically, "Cry aloud, for he is a god : either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is

ought always to be introduced on every occasion of public worship. With those who do so we by no means find fault: but we object to being ourselves constantly bound down even to this scriptural form, and much more to any human forms. Though a form were, every word of it, in the language of Scripture, we think that we ought not to bind ourselves to the use of any one part of Scripture, to the perpetual exclusion of any other part of Scripture. We wish to be left at liberty to employ, in prayer, any part of Scripture which may be appropriate to the sentiment we intend to express. It should be remembered, too, that there are other forms of prayer enjoined in Scripture, besides this: for example (Hos. xiv. 2), "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves" or fruit "of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." We have another example in Joel ii. 17: "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is thy God?"

This prayer was peculiarly well suited to the disciples at the time when the kingdom of God was about to be introduced by the establishment of Christianity, and when they had not yet begun to pray in the name of Christ: in fact, some of the petitions were in previous use among the Jews. It is quite consistent, however, with its being an absolutely perfect form at the time it was given, to say that we now desire something additional, namely, an express reference to the work and name of Christ. Our Lord said to his disciples,* "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." It is unfavourable to the opinion of those who argue for the absolute incumbency of introducing its very words into all, or almost all, our devotional exercises, that, though there are various prayers recorded, which were put up by the disciples after our Lord's ascension, there is no mention of this particular prayer, nor indeed, any historical proof of the formal use, in Christian worship, of this, or any prayer, till the third century. Justin Martyr, who suffered martyrdom in the

on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened." Dr. Adam Clarke furnishes a most striking illustration of the same point, in the following form of prayer used by Tippoo Sahib, which the doctor met with in a book of devotion taken out of his pocket, when he was found among the slain at the storming of Seringapatam; in which book there were several prayers written with his own hand, and signed with his own name. "O God, O God, O God, O God!—O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!—O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal, O living, O immortal!—O Creator of the heavens and the earth!—O thou who art endowed with majesty and authority, O wonderful," &c.

* John xvi. 23.

year of our Lord 167, says, that in the primitive Churches, "The president offered up prayers according to his ability:" and Tertullian says, "We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart."* At the same time, with regard to the Lord's Prayer, all the clauses admit of a meaning which is quite suitable to these latter days of the Church; and, while it ought always to be regarded as a model of prayer in respect of matter, simplicity, and actual petition, we are bound, while we intentionally avoid all unreasonable repetition of it, and still more all superstitious use of it, as if it were to operate like a charm—we are bound occasionally to employ, in whole, or in part, its very words.†

Let us now proceed to such an exposition of the prayer itself as can be given in one discourse. The first part of the Lord's Prayer is the *preface*, which is in these words: "*Our Father who art in heaven.*" Among the various titles of God, that of our Father, is, perhaps, the most instructive, solemn, and endearing. He is the Father of us all by creation. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."—"He is the Father of our spirits," and "the former of our bodies."—"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" In this address, then, we glorify him as our creator. He is also the Father of us all, in respect of his providence. As an earthly father is supposed to protect and provide for his children, so the Lord, whatever may be our state and character, preserves and provides for us: and, in this view, we also acknowledge him in this address. But neither as our creator, nor as our preserver, can we approach him aright, unless, as his children by regeneration and adoption, we come to him as our reconciled Father through Jesus Christ. We are not naturally his spiritual children; we are not his children in any endearing sense, or in dutiful feelings, nor is he our Father, as taking any complacency in us: on the contrary, we are the children of the wicked one, and God is angry with us every day. But those who are reconciled to him by faith in his Son's atonement, and born again and renewed after his image, and adopted by grace into his family, become his children indeed, and are treated by him with much greater kindness than the word "father" can express when applied to man. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He provides for them all things needful, not only for life, but for godliness. He loves them. He defends them. He allows them free access into his presence, to make known all their feelings. He chastises them when

* Sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus.

† The Directory of the Church of Scotland does not enjoin the constant use of this (or of any other particular part of Scripture), in worship; but it recommends its occasional use, and the Lord's Prayer is fully explained in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Accordingly, it is occasionally introduced, but not as a matter of course, in our public worship; and it must be supposed to be well understood by those who belong to our communion. All these remarks are made, merely to explain our views on this subject, and by no means with the wish to attack those of others.

needful. He constitutes them heirs with God, and joint heirs with Christ. On each of these ideas much might be said, but we must be contented with merely stating them.

What a foolish and sinful part do you act who refuse to acknowledge this gracious Father, as your Father! "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you."—"Do ye thus requite the Lord? O foolish people and unwise! is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?" Return, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight:" and he will receive you and bless you.

On the other hand, what a blessed privilege is yours who, in the saving sense, have God for your father! What manner of love he hath bestowed on you, that you should be called his children! Avail yourselves of the privilege; and see that you conduct yourselves towards him with all dutiful affection. It is however, chiefly in reference to the sentiments with which you should approach him in prayer, that this most interesting title of Father is here to be considered: and, in this view, it teaches you to approach him "with all holy reverence and confidence." The title forbids all indecent familiarity, and yet invites all filial boldness. It reminds you at once of your complete dependence on him, and of your endearing relation to him. You do him injustice if you doubt of his gracious disposition towards you, or of his readiness to hear you. This very comparison is employed by our Lord in a subsequent part of this chapter, to remove your suspicion, and to encourage you, not only to pray to God, but to pray in the belief that you will be heard. You see, then, to what a glorious privilege you are called, in being called to pray to God as your Father. Endeavour to approach him in that character; and, sensible of the difficulty of doing so, nay, of your own complete insufficiency to do so, let it be one of your most earnest requests that you may be delivered from the spirit of bondage and of fear, and may receive "the spirit of adoption, whereby you may cry, Abba, Father."

The expression is "*Our* Father;" and the pronoun, being in the plural number, reminds us to use social prayer—"to pray with and for others." Social prayer, in general, and especially this mode of praying to God as our common Father, is finely calculated to cherish mutual Christian love. Social prayer, moreover, has a particular promise of a gracious answer. Our Lord said to his disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

God is here styled our Father "*who is in heaven.*" When he is called our Father in heaven, or heavenly Father, this distin-

guishes him from our earthly fathers, and obviates all grovelling ideas of him. It is true that he is everywhere present—"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord:" yet there is a difference; on earth he is invisible, in heaven he is visible; on earth his glory is only seen reflected from his works, in heaven his glory is seen directly; heaven is his throne, while the earth is his footstool. This shows that he is able to help us, and also that we should approach him reverently, though confidently. "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore, let thy words be few."

After the preface comes the first of the six petitions, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" God's name is put for his designation, or his glory, or himself; and, in the enlarged sense, it includes his "names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works." Let thy name be "hallowed"—sanctified, considered as holy and glorious. To hallow God's name is to have right thoughts, reverential expressions, and righteous actions with regard to it. How contrary to this petition are profane swearing, and also the various light and thoughtless ways of speaking of God and divine things in common conversation, and even in exercises that are considered to be religious! Well is he entitled to the most reverential regard, of whom it is said, "Holy and reverend is his name." This may be considered both as an act of adoration, and as a petition. Viewing it in the former light, we ourselves should magnify the Lord in pronouncing it; and viewing it in the latter, we should feel an earnest desire that he would enable us and others to magnify him. In putting up this petition, we are asking what God is sure to grant. When Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thy name; then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The second petition is, "*Thy kingdom come.*" May the kingdom, or reign, of God come. God's right to reign is universal; nay, in respect of providential government, "his kingdom" actually "ruleth over all." But, in respect of willing and dutiful submission, it is far otherwise: for men have rebelled against him, and have said that they will not have him to rule over them. In order to restore them to obedience and happiness, he has appointed the various means of grace: especially, he has committed the task of regaining them to his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, whose kingdom is a gracious kingdom—a reign over the hearts and lives of his people, consisting in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is known that when the Jews, in ancient times, prayed for the coming of the kingdom of God, they had a particular view to the coming of Messiah. He was indeed come, and his kingdom was in some

degree, come, at the time our Lord directed his disciples to put up this petition; but little, comparatively, was yet accomplished, in the actual establishment of his reign over sinners of mankind. The disciples were, therefore, to make its success an object of special prayer. And, though the Spirit was poured down in rich effusion at Pentecost, and many have been brought in, yet this kingdom is far from having attained that universality to which it is destined. There is given unto the Son of man "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." To pray that God's kingdom may come, is now to pray that the gospel may be universally published and received; it is to pray that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; it is to pray "that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened." Let us consider what is necessary for us to do, to show that we are in earnest in putting up this petition. It is necessary that we become the subjects of this kingdom ourselves. We cannot really wish the prosperity of a kingdom with which we are at variance. If every one who hears the gospel of the kingdom would be careful to embrace it for himself, the number of its subjects would rapidly increase. And if we are earnest in putting up this petition, we shall not only pray, but do everything in our power for the promotion of religion in the world. We shall study to forward it by a holy life, letting "our light so shine before men that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven." We shall exert ourselves with our own connexions, and in our own neighbourhood. And we shall, according to our ability, contribute of our substance to the support of plans for the propagation of Christianity in heathen and other unenlightened lands. It would be absurd for a man who was able to work, to content himself with praying for his daily bread, and lie by in idleness; equally absurd it is for men to pray that the kingdom of God may come, and to take no steps for its establishment. Let us, then, as this petition reminds us, begin with the cordial submission of our own hearts to the reign of God; and then take a sincere, lively, and active interest in the salvation of our fellow-men.

The third petition is, "*Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*" The *perceptive* will of God, which seems here chiefly intended, is done, perfectly done, in heaven. As for the glorified saints, "they serve him day and night in his temple." As for the holy angels, the Psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." It is true we cannot attain to their perfection: but perfection should be our aim; and our obedience must be like theirs, in respect of cheerfulness and universality. For ourselves, let us remember the absolute necessity of our being brought to do the will of God here, if we would do it at last

in heaven. "Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, ' says Christ, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father, who is in heaven." His perceptive will is revealed to us in his Word, and that will we should study to know and obey. We here also pray that the *purposing* and *providential* will of God may be done. He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: such is the fact; and by presenting this petition, we express our cordial acquiescence in that fact. There is, indeed, one branch of this duty, in which the inhabitants of heaven cannot set us an example, namely, patient submission to painful dispensations of God's providential will; and yet their earthly history was troubled, for it was "through much tribulation that they entered into the kingdom of God." Whether it is painful, or pleasant, let us ever say, "The will of the Lord be done." As for others, this is a petition that the will of God may be done by them universally. If we thus pray aright, the sight of sin in others will be very distressing to us—when we behold transgressors we shall be grieved: and, on the other hand, we shall rejoice greatly when we see any walking in the truth. But especially, let us be careful that we do the will of God ourselves. "This is the will of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent;" and "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." Let it be our constant study and earnest prayer, that we may thus do his will. "May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

The fourth petition is, "*Give us day by day our daily bread.*" It has often been remarked that the very order in which these petitions are introduced should teach us to give the first and chief place, in our desires, to those things which more immediately relate to the glory of God, and, in connexion with that, to our spiritual welfare. On the subject of the order of the petitions, a pious author* remarks as follows: "It is known to be the ordinary course of skilful orators, to place the meanest part of their speech in the middle; and in this, let the ear of any understanding mind be judge, whether it sounds not much better that this request pass in the middle, than if the prayer should have ended with it. Whereas now it begins spiritually, and closes so. How few are there that follow Christ's estimate in this, that have the very strength of their desires, and most of their thoughts, on things that are spiritual, and do but in passing lend a word to the things of this life!" We should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Nevertheless, as we have bodies as well as souls, and as there are various promises made to us of a temporal nature, the state of our bodies, and of our temporal affairs, should be attended to,

* Leighton.

and have its own place and own proportion, in our prayers. It is only *bread* that we are here taught to ask. As bread, however, is one of the things which are needful for the body, we may consider this petition as including all the necessities of life, leaving it to God to determine what is necessary, according to the circumstances in which we are placed. We are here evidently discouraged from asking superfluities and wealth. If these come, we should be thankful for them, and careful to use them to God's glory; but we are not to pray for them: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."—"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out:" therefore, "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." When we ask what is necessary, as our "bread," we are reminded that we should ask it, not as the "bread of deceit," or the "bread of idleness," but in the way of honest industry, of righteousness, and of diligence. And we are also reminded that, even in the way of diligence, we are still to look to God, and not to ourselves, for what we need: we are to pray that he would *give* it, freely give it. As in spiritual, so in temporal things: whoever may plant, and water, or labour in any way, it is God who giveth the increase. He can easily disappoint all our endeavours; and when we succeed, we should remember to whom we are indebted. And as it is only bread, or what is necessary, we are to ask, so we are not warranted to ask even that in such abundance at once as would secure us ever after, or even for any great length of time, and render it needless for us to pray for it any more; but our prayer must be, "Give us day by day our daily bread"—that is, we are to be every day asking what is sufficient for that day;* and we are as well to pass a day without food, as a day without prayer. As the Israelites of old received the manna from heaven fresh every day, so we must receive our necessities in a similar way; that is, we must see them constantly coming from God; else we are living without God, and can have no blessing with what his disregarded bounty may send. And though it is plainly literal bread to which this petition directly refers, yet, as "man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," it is proper, in pronouncing these words, to desire that the Lord would bestow on us the bread of life, or

* Τον ἄρτον ἡμῶν τον ἱπiousιον διδου ἡμιν το καθ' ἡμεραν. There has been considerable diversity of opinion as to the precise meaning of the word ἱπiousιον. As the idea of "daily" is fully expressed by the phrase καθ' ἡμεραν, it seems probable that the word ἱπiousιον is intended to express something different. The idea that this is a petition for the bread of "to-morrow," though adopted by Lightfoot, is surely untenable and paradoxical. Origen says that the word ἱπiousιος seems to have been formed by the evangelists; as it does not occur in any of the earlier Greek writers—ἵσκει πειπλᾶσθαι ὑπο των εὐαγγελιστων: he renders the word, however, ἡμεριον, "daily," as does also Chrysostom. I adhere to the opinion of those who think the word is intended to signify "sufficient," or, sufficient for subsistence: quasi ἱπὶ οὐσιαν. As πειριουσιος signifies abundant, ἱπiousιος seems to signify sufficient. This explanation of the word is given by Theophylact: Ἄρτος ἱπὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ καὶ συστάσι ἡμῶν αὐταρκη, "bread sufficient for our subsistence, and sustenance."

needful supplies of grace for our souls. In this spiritual sense, as well as in the literal (and here indeed it is even more directly and sensibly felt than in the literal), we must remember, that no store of grace can be treasured up by us from which we may draw independently on God, and that we must live as the daily and constant pensioners on his spiritual bounty. Whenever the actual communication of his influences is restrained, that moment all that is truly gracious in our affections and conduct ceases. Let us endeavour, then, to preserve a constant dependence on divine providence and grace, and daily say, "Give us day by day our daily bread."

The fifth petition is, "*And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*" We have here what is, strictly speaking, the petition itself, and then an explanatory clause subjoined. The petition itself is, "Forgive us our sins." Now, this petition implies, both a conviction and an acknowledgment of our sinfulness: it is, in fact, if properly offered up, a penitential confession of our sins. Then, it is more expressly an earnest prayer for forgiveness, for deliverance from the guilt and punishment of our sins, and for the restoration of our Father's complacency whom we have offended. It is altogether erroneous to say that believers have no need to pray for forgiveness; to say this is directly to oppose the authority of Christ himself, who here teaches his own disciples so to pray. It is true that all believers—all who have passed from a state of condemnation to a state of justification, in which God pardons all their sins, and accepts them as righteous in his sight—are safe for ever; it is true that the Lord will never utterly cast any of them off: but, as they are still liable (though regenerated and sanctified) to fall into sin, so they are still in need of forgiveness, such forgiveness as a beloved and, on the whole, a dutiful son needs, when he has done anything to displease his earthly father. Remission of sins cannot possibly, in the strict sense, extend but to sins that are past;* but, it is a provision of the well-ordered covenant, that remission of a believer's sins that are past secures the remission of his sins that are to come, by securing his subsequent penitential and believing return to his Father for such remission. Hence, believers, in the consciousness of their remaining sins, whether more or less heinous, should always pray, "Forgive us our sins."

The explanatory and qualifying clause to this petition is, "*For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*" No person who knows any thing of the way of pardon opened up in Scripture, will ever suppose that this clause teaches that our forgiving others is the reason why God forgives us. The moving cause of our forgiveness is God's free grace; the procuring, or meritorious cause, is the righteousness of Christ; and the instrumental cause, or means, of our obtaining forgiveness through Christ, is faith alone. This is the doctrine clearly taught, where

* Rom. iii. 25.

the subject is expressly handled; and no occasional phrase, rightly interpreted, is contrary to it. This is not a plea of merit; but it is a description, in part, of the disposition of all who are forgiven, and who come anew seeking forgiveness, for they are themselves of a forgiving disposition.* According to Matthew, the petition runs thus: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:" or, we ask forgiveness, according to the manner, and measure, in which we forgive others, and which should be freely, fully, and for ever. Not that we are bound to pass from all pecuniary debts; that would be quite an overstretching of the meaning, though even these we must not exact in any way which is rigorous, or inhumane: but debts in the figurative sense, or injuries, we ought readily and heartily to forgive all men. Our Lord follows up this prayer, in Matthew, with the following words, farther enforcing the same idea: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.† Let us be conscientious, then, in forgiving, as we hope to be forgiven. What a motive to forgiveness does this clause suggest, when, every time we repeat it, without having forgiven those who have injured us, we virtually pray that we ourselves may not be forgiven by God! The following explanation of this petition is truly excellent, considering it as the prayer of believers—"We pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because, by his grace, we are enabled from the heart to forgive others."

The sixth and last petition is, "*And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*" Temptations are of two kinds—enticements to sin and trials. In the former sense of enticing to sin, God never tempts; and to say that he does, would be the blasphemy of representing him as the author of sin. In the language of James: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."‡ Temptations, in this sense, come from a man's own heart, from the world, and from Satan. In the other sense, however, the sense of trials, temptations may be considered as sent by God. Thus God "tempted," or tried Abraham, in commanding him to offer up his son Isaac. No doubt, trials are often blessed to God's people; they are blessed, when rightly borne and improved. The apostle James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth tempta-

* The *καὶ γὰρ* is not casual, but explanatory.

† See also the parable of the unmerciful servant, Matt. xviii. 23.

‡ In respect to what is sinful, God is sometimes said to do what he only permits to be done, and does not positively interfere to prevent; and, though he never tempts men to sin, he may permit them to be tempted to it: hence the suitableness of this petition, in this particular view. Quod igitur dicimus Deo, Ne nos inferas in tentationem, quid dicimus, nisi Ne nos inferri sinas?—"When we say to God, Lead us not into temptation, what do we say but, Suffer us not to be led?"—Augustine, *De Bono Perseverantiæ*, cap. vi.

tion: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." But, when we consider our own great weakness, it would be wrong for us to ask that we should be subjected to any very severe trials; nay, we feel inclined to ask, and we are here encouraged to ask, that God either would not subject us to such as might endanger our stability, or, if he should, that he would support us under them. Now, we have this pleasing declaration,* "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This pleasing declaration applies, both to what we commonly call trials, and to the enticements of Satan.

This petition also teaches us to say: "*But deliver us from evil.*" This might have been still more exactly rendered, "deliver," or rescue us from "the evil one;" that is, from Satan: so the very same word is rendered in several other places.† In this sense, we pray that we may be preserved from the snares and assaults of the devil, who seeks to destroy us. Or, taking the sense of evil in general, we pray that we may be delivered from all real evil—from the evil of error, and sin, and the world, and final apostasy, and eternal ruin. In this, we are praying along with Christ himself, who, in his intercessory prayer for his followers, says: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but, that thou shouldest keep them from the evil;" that is, from the evil one, and from all real evil.

If we present this petition aright, we must do so in the recollection of our exposed condition, in an humble sense of our own weakness, and in a conviction of God's ability and willingness to keep us from falling. And all these feelings should lead us to avoid, as much as possible, all dangerous and tempting situations, and all incentives to sin, and, when we are unavoidably exposed to temptation, to use all means in our power to overcome it. "Watch and pray," says our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation." If we attend to these rules, we may expect that the Lord "will deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom."

The conclusion, or doxology, which we find in Matthew, is entirely omitted in Luke. It is an ascription of praise to God, somewhat similar to that in 1 Chron. xxix. 11: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for, all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." The conclusion, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever," is not only a sublime act of adoration, but an encouragement to prayer, inasmuch as God's being possessed of the kingdom, and of all power, is a

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† Matt. xiii. 19, 38; 1 John ii. 13, 14, iii. 12, v. 18.

proof that he is the proper object of prayer, and able to grant what we ask.

The word "*Amen*," with which this, like almost every other prayer, concludes, signifies both verily, and so be it. In the sense of verily, it signifies that we assent to the truth of all that has been said;—and in the sense of so be it, it signifies an earnest wish that the whole prayer may be granted. From the use of this word at the close of prayers, the apostle draws an argument to prove that all public religious services should be carried on in a language understood by the people who are present, and, of course, condemns the use of the Lord's Prayer, or any other prayer, in the Latin language, where that language is not the common language of the people: * "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" Think well, my friends, of the vast and solemn import of this single word, Amen, when it comes to be pronounced at the end of our prayers. In this one word, you, as it were, pray the whole prayer over again, however long it may have been. And when you consider the importance of the subjects introduced into a scriptural prayer, and the unspeakable value of the deliverances and of the blessings implored, what an emphasis of feeling should you throw into this word, whether pronounced audibly, or breathed inwardly to yourselves!

Such is that admirable form and model of prayer, which our Lord has prescribed, for our occasional use, and constant imitation. How comprehensive, and yet how compendious! There are several things which might now be very appropriately added, but the subsequent verses, if God give us an opportunity of considering them, will again bring the same subject of prayer before us. In the meantime, may the Lord bless what has been said; and to his name be praise. Amen.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

LECTURE LVII.

LUKE XI. 5-13.

“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

HAVING, in the foregoing part of the chapter, furnished the disciples, at their own request, with a form and model of prayer, our Lord proceeds, in the verses now read, to urge them to *persevering importunity* in prayer. Of these nine verses, the first four are peculiar to Luke, and the last five are nearly the same with a part of the sermon on the mount, as given by Matthew. The first four verses contain a supposition of circumstances which might occur in any part of the world, but which are more likely to occur in the East; for, in hot climates, it is not unusual, when it can be done with safety, to travel in the cool of the night.* In the case before us, a traveller, wearied with his journey, and standing in need of refreshment, is supposed to arrive unexpectedly, and at midnight, at the house of a friend, who, having no provisions, is quite unprepared to entertain him. He who is thus visited, is then supposed to go out to apply to a neighbouring friend for the loan of some provisions. In such a case, it is likely enough, as here supposed, that he who, with his family, was thus disturbed in his repose by so untimely a visit, would endeavour to put off his friend with a variety of excuses: but, if his friend should persevere in pleading with him, he would be at last prevailed on, and would yield, though it were only to get rid of his importunity.† All this is here so

* Scott.

† Martial's Epigram, lib. iv. 15, though much surpassed by this parable in variety and beauty of imagery, cannot fail to interest the classical scholar:—

Mille tibi nummos hesternæ nocti roganti,
In sex aut septem, Cœciliane, dies,
Non habeo, dixi; sed tu causatus amici
Adventum, lancem paucaeque vasa rogas,
Stultus es an stultum me credis, amice? negavi
Mille tibi nummos, millia quinque dabo?

naturally and plainly stated, as not to require any explanation. Let us proceed, then, without further remark, to the practical application of the supposition.

Beside the leading lesson here taught, to which we shall soon more particularly advert, there are several other things taught, more or less directly. We are taught the duty of hospitality, and that not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully shown: and we are taught, in connexion with this, the duty of friendly and neighbourly accommodation. And then, as this is a parable, in which spiritual things are shadowed forth, under a comparison drawn from common life, we are reminded that we ourselves are destitute of all temporal and spiritual good, and should apply to God for whatever we need, either for body, or for soul. We are especially taught to apply to him for "loaves"—for bread, for the necessities of life; and for supplies of grace—for the bread of life that cometh down from heaven, for the bread that endureth unto life everlasting. We are taught to go to God with confidence, as to a friend who knows and loves, and is inclined to help us. We are taught to apply to him for others, as well as for ourselves; for this man came for his friend, and not for himself. "Pray one for another," saith the apostle James. We surely come to God on a good errand, when we come to him for the means of enabling us to do good to others, and to entertain and edify those that come to us.* We are here taught, also, to apply to God in the time of difficulty and straits. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." But the chief lesson here read to us, is a lesson of importunity; that is, of earnestness and perseverance in prayer. It is necessary, indeed, to beware of running the parallel too close; we must be contented with the outline of the meaning, and not imagine that anything of the infirmity and indisposition to help, which appeared in one of these men, is to be found in God. But then, this difference only renders still more obvious the delightful conclusion to which the parable is intended to lead: for, if importunity proves so effectual with men, notwithstanding all their selfish indolence, how much more will it prevail with God, whose benevolence is so vast to prompt his aid, and whose energy is so powerful to impart actual help with the utmost ease! "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The Lord, instead of being offended, is pleased with our importunity; he is more ready to hear than we are to speak, and to give than we are to ask. That he sometimes delays to answer is only a particular illustration of his love; he only waits till he can answer in the best possible way, and at the best possible time.

• Henry.

However, from these delays arises, in part, the need of persevering importunity. Intending to press this point more fully on your consideration in a subsequent part of this exercise, let us proceed to offer a few remarks on the remaining five verses, in which, as formerly, in the sermon on the mount, our Lord follows up the same subject in the way of express commands and encouraging promises.

“*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*” In this passage, asking, seeking, and knocking, just stand for praying : but the words have a strong sense, and seem to increase in intensity of meaning. “Ask,” as a beggar asks for alms ; or, as one petitions for some great favour. “Seek,” as one seeks for something valuable that has been lost ; or, as a merchantman seeketh goodly pearls. This implies that we should add to our petitions our endeavours in the use of the appointed means. “Knock,” as one that desires admission into a house. Sin has, as it were, shut against us the door of admittance into God’s favour and presence, and we are called on to pray, and to pray earnestly, that he would graciously open that door to us, in order that we may escape from our exposed and wretched condition, and enter into a state of safety and happiness. And you observe that there is an express promise made to those who thus pray, that they shall have a favourable answer : and there is also a declaration that, in point of fact, such is the experience of praying persons. To the more full illustration of these two connected points we shall return by-and-by. It only remains, in explanation, to notice the illustration of the same subject by a comparison drawn from the readiness which earthly parents show to give their children what they ask.

“*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or, if he ask a fish, will he, for a fish, give him a serpent ? or, if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ?*” Some stones are not unlike bread ; a serpent is not unlike some kinds of fishes—for example, those of the eel species ; and the body of a large scorpion is not unlike an egg ;* but would any father, who is possessed of the common feelings of humanity, mock his son’s hunger with a stone, or endanger his life with venomous reptiles ? Surely not. A father will neither altogether refuse

* Scorpions are large insects, of which there are several different species, varying from an inch and a half to six inches or more in length, and of various colours ; most being dark, but one species white. Their sting causes a very painful inflammation, and is often dangerous, and sometimes even fatal. Their appearance is somewhat like that of the lobster ; and the shape of their bodies has some resemblance to that of an egg.—*Buffoon and Bochart*. We have the following figurative description of the miseries to be inflicted by certain cruel people, in the 9th chapter of the Revelation : “Unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”—“And to them it was given that they should not kill men, but that they should be tormented (by them) five months : and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a man.”—“And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails.”

the request of his famishing son, nor give him what is useless or hurtful : on the contrary, he will listen to his application, and bestow on him what his case requires. But observe the conclusion which our Lord draws from this : “ *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?* ” In the parallel passage, Matt. vii. 11, the expression is, “ How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give *good things* to them that ask him ? ” These good things are here summed up in the gift of the Holy Spirit ; for, those who have received the Spirit, have received Christ and everything necessary for their spiritual good here, and also the earnest of eternal life hereafter.

Let us remember, my friends, how entirely dependent we are on the influences of the Holy Spirit for the actual application of the benefits of the Saviour's purchase—for light, faith, peace, holiness, comfort, stability, and every grace. Let us be mindful, too, how we are to expect these influences, namely, in answer to prayer. The gift of the Spirit is promised in the covenant of grace. “ I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” But this promise is only made to those who plead it in prayer ; for it is added,* “ Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” And, in proof that God will bestow this inestimable gift on those who ask it, an appeal is here made to the common experience of children as such, and to the feelings and practice of earthly parents as such. Let children say if they have not, generally speaking, found their parents ready, to the utmost of their ability, to promote their happiness and comply with their reasonable desires, and even ready to deny themselves in many respects, in order that *they* might not feel any want. And let parents think of their deep feelings of compassion for their children, and their active and cheerful exertions for their happiness ; and thence, let both learn somewhat of the force of the argument involved in the comparison which our Lord here draws, when he speaks of the great God as our Father, and of us as his children. But the comparison does not nearly come up to the truth, as Jesus himself declares. Parents are “ evil ; ” earthly parents, even the wisest and best of them, are imperfect, weak, and sinful creatures ; but our heavenly Father, he who made, who preserves, and who has redeemed us, is perfectly wise, holy, and powerful, and also infinitely compassionate. If, then, earthly parents, who are in many respects so ignorant, and so weak, and so sinful, have yet knowledge, and power, and feeling enough to give good gifts to their children ; how much more shall our heavenly Father, who is infinitely wise, powerful, and kind, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?

And now, let us take up the leading topic in these nine verses,

* Ezek. xxxv. 27, 37.

and direct your attention more fully to that particular characteristic of the duty of prayer, which, from the word used in the 8th verse, is commonly called *importunity*. This one word includes the two ideas of earnestness and perseverance, being equivalent to what the apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans,* calls "continuing instant in prayer."

Consider here, first of all, *the reasonableness and incumbency* of such importunity. With regard to the earnestness which is implied in importunity of prayer, it is difficult to conceive how any objection to this can be raised on the ground of reason; for, it is plain, that not only the prayer which is altogether insincere, and proceeding out of feigned lips—the prayer of the hypocrite—but also the prayer which is not the expression of an actual wish, nay, of some considerable degree of intensity of desire, is but a mocking of God, and must be an abomination to him. With regard, however, to the perseverance which is implied in importunity, the unenlightened mind has sometimes suggested that it is enough to address a request once to the Almighty; because, if he be inclined to grant it, one intimation of the wish is as well understood by him as a thousand, and we are not to imagine that he will be driven from his purpose by human importunity. Now, it is true that God's ear is not heavy that it cannot readily hear; it is true that we are not to be heard for our much speaking; and it is also true that God is of one mind, and none can turn him. It is even true that there are cases in which further perseverance in prayer is not a duty, but should be desisted from. These are cases in which men are applying for any temporal thing of which there is no express promise in Scripture. There are various things of this kind which we may lawfully desire, and express our desire for in prayer, in as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and our own spiritual good. But when, in any such case, Providence appears plainly to have ordered the matter otherwise than we wish, and to have so settled the point that we could not have our desire but by a miracle—in short, when we have in any way discovered what ought to be sufficient to convince us that it is not the will of God to grant what we are asking, to persevere in praying for it after that would not be holy and warrantable importunity, but unauthorized and troublesome obstinacy. In such a case, we ought to learn from that of Moses, to whom, when he attempted to prevail with God to allow him to pass over Jordan, after he had been told that he was to die in the wilderness, God said, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." At the same time, in many cases which are chiefly of a temporal nature, where God's will is not plainly made known by circumstances, perseverance in prayer is both reasonable and useful. But with regard to spiritual blessings—those blessings which are connected with salvation, which are absolutely necessary to our happiness, which are expressly promised to those who ask them,

* Rom. xii. 12.

and which are more immediately referred to in this passage as included in the gift of the Holy Spirit--the reasonableness and propriety, nay, the absolute incumbency, of this earnest perseverance, this importunity, are very certain.

The reasonableness and incumbency of importunity in prayer appear from *the majesty and holiness of that Being whom we address, contrasted with our own weakness and sinfulness*. The depth of feeling and anxiety for success with which we approach to ask a favour of a fellow creature, bear a proportion to his dignity and worth: what reverence, then, what fervour, what earnestness and perseverance of supplication, become us in drawing near to the King of kings, and Lord of lords! An indifferent, lukewarm, and careless spirit and demeanour, in approaching this august Being, are most sinful and offensive. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," says he to every such careless worshipper; "so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." And when we bring into comparison with his glory and holiness our own meanness and unworthiness, the inference is still strengthened. Abraham felt this sense of his own unworthiness urging him to holy importunity, as appears in his words: "Behold now, I have taken it upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." He spoke again and again; and then said, "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once." In like manner, Solomon prayed earnestly, in an humble sense of his unworthiness, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?" Surely, according to God's majesty and holiness, as contrasted with our own weakness and sinfulness, so should be the importunity with which we address him.

The reasonableness and incumbency of such importunity will further appear, if we consider *the great value of the deliverances and positive blessings* we implore. I speak here, of course, chiefly of spiritual deliverances and blessings. What more reasonable than that our anxiety and perseverance of pursuit should be regulated by the value of the objects we have in view? We should, unquestionably, grudge that earnestness and continuance of application to avert a trifling evil, or to obtain a trifling advantage, which we should yet think well spent to save our life, or to gain a kingdom. But, let us only think of the importance of the spiritual deliverances for which we pray to God—deliverance from destructive ignorance, error, unbelief, guilt, and pollution—deliverance from the curse of God now, and from the wrath to come—deliverance from everlasting misery—and then let us ask ourselves with what importunity we ought to pray for such deliverances. How will the man cry for help who perceives the surrounding tide approaching to overwhelm him! but how much more should we cry to God to save us from being drowned in eternal destruction and perdition! When a man

has fallen into a deep pit, from which he cannot of himself get out, will he remain silent, and die without an effort to bring people to his aid? No; he will call, and call earnestly, for help; he will cry as loud as he can; nor will he be satisfied with crying once, or twice, or any number of times; he will multiply and prolong his cries—he will cry himself hoarse; and though his strength be much exhausted, he will cry from time to time, as long as he is able to utter a sound—he will never desist till his cries bring him relief. Now, that man presents but a feeble emblem of our dismal and helpless condition, as fallen into the deep pit of sin, which, if grace prevent not, is the first part of the descent into the bottomless pit. With what earnest perseverance, then, with what importunity, ought we to cry unto the Lord, that by the blood of the covenant he would bring us, poor prisoners, out of the pit wherein there is no water! Surely, we should wait patiently for the Lord, till he incline his ear unto us, and hear our cry—till he bring us up out of this horrible pit, out of this miry clay—till he set our feet on a rock, and establish our goings, and till he put a new song into our mouth, even praise to our God. “The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail:” but O with what speed, anxiety, and perseverance, should we importune the Lord God to deliver us from the wretched captivity of Satan! and how should we agonize in the prayer, “Lord, save us, else we perish!”

And then, when we think of the value of the positive blessings we ask in prayer, we cannot but perceive that they well deserve, and strongly call for this importunity. Light, regeneration, pardon, peace, holiness, God’s smile in life, his support in death, and his glorious and blissful presence for ever!—these, and such as these, which all come along with the gift of his Holy Spirit, are the good things, the blessings, which we ask of God in prayer. If important earthly advantages call forth earnestness and perseverance of pursuit, what earnestness and perseverance of pursuit should be called forth by such advantages as these! It is not a loaf, or three loaves of the bread that perisheth, that we ask; but it is the bread of life. It is not a draught of any earthly fountain, or stream, that we ask; but it is the parched soul’s living water—that water, of which, if we drink, we shall never thirst again, but it shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is not bodily raiment, which waxeth old, that we ask; but it is the beautiful and lasting garments of salvation, it is the robe of righteousness, it is the wedding garment of the heavenly Bridegroom, it is the fine raiment that adorns the soul, it is the robe which is washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and in which, if it be put on us, we shall shine eternally in the company of the glorified. It is not human wisdom that we ask; but it is the wisdom which is from above, the being wise unto salvation. It is not bodily health we ask; but it is spiritual health from the leaves of the tree

which are for the healing of the nations. It is not the honour which cometh from man that we ask ; but it is the honour that cometh from God, and which will be ours before an assembled universe. It is not what men call riches, it is not the accumulated gains of trade, it is not the wealth of both the Indies, that we ask ; but it is the unsearchable riches of Christ, it is that wealth which comes through the poverty of God's eternal Son, it is the treasures which are in heaven. It is not an earthly crown of gold and precious stones, which troubles him that wears it, and is often plucked from his head and put on another, or trampled in the dust, and which he must at all events lay aside when the king of terrors comes—it is not such a crown as this that we ask ; but it is a crown of glory, that fadeth not away, it is the crown of righteousness, which is laid up for the saints, and which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall, at the great day, give to all who love his appearing. Nay, it is not the whole world that we ask ; for, though the world, with its possessions and pleasures were all our own, it were an unsatisfying and transitory portion, it were a paltry trifle, it were mere dust in the balance, when weighed against the noble prize on which the prayerful have set their hearts ; it is not this whole world that we ask for our portion : but it is heaven with all its unspeakable and endless happiness, it is the ever-living and infinite Jehovah himself. Such, then, being the value of the blessings we ask, how importunate should we be in asking them ! How should we ask, and seek, and knock for them ! Not once, or twice, or any limited number of times ; but perseveringly should we pray. We should resolve not to give over till the Lord bless us indeed ; we should continue to pray, till our prayers are lost in praises.

I would next mention some *encouragements* to this importunity in prayer. For example, it tends to prepare the mind for the blessings asked, and even is often the actual enjoyment of them. Importunate prayer is not intended to change the purpose of God, or to work in him a willingness to help us, as if he were originally indisposed to do so ; but, while it does honour to God, and manifests our sense of the importance of the blessings we ask, it evidently tends to quicken our desire after them, and to render us more prepared to relish them when they are granted. Nay, such prayer is often the very possession of the blessings ; it is an exercise of faith, penitence, humility, holiness, and love, and that, too, at the very time when we may think that we are only praying for these graces. The Lord “prevents,” that is, anticipates, “us with the blessings of goodness ;” and while we are praying, as well as when we are musing, the fire of devotion burns.

Again, such prayer has *the promise of being answered*. The general command to pray implies a general promise of a favourable answer. But there are many particular and express promises of this kind, especially to those who pray with earnestness

and perseverance. Of this the 9th verse of this chapter is a well-known and most encouraging specimen. It is true that there are many prayers which are not answered; but the apostle James informs us of the reason of this: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." If men address their prayers to a creature, and not to the Creator; if they apply in a spirit of self-righteousness, and not in the name of Jesus, and in a believing dependence on him for acceptance; if they pray as sufficient of themselves, and not as looking for the assistance of the Holy Spirit; if they pray for what is not promised; if they even pray for what is promised, without using the other appointed means; if they pray with an unworthy end in view, such as, to consume what they ask on their lusts; and if they pray with indifference, and soon desist:—in all these cases they pray amiss, there is no promise that they shall be heard, and they cannot expect to be heard. But there is no possibility of any person praying to the true object of prayer, through the proper channel, for the promised gift of the Spirit, and with importunity, and yet not being heard at last. To every one who proceeds in this way, the promise of a gracious answer is unquestionably made, and will as unquestionably be fulfilled. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Consider, too, for your further encouragement, some of the many scriptural *examples of the success* of importunate prayer. Think of Jacob wrestling with God, and prevailing. Think of Elias, who "was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth, for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." And remember that though that was a miraculous case, it is introduced in proof of the general truth that "the effectual," or energetic, "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Think of the woman of Canaan, who, after repeated failures, succeeded at last for her daughter.* Think of Paul, who, after he had "besought the Lord thrice that a certain severe trial should depart from him, received what (though the trial was continued) was doubtless a most favourable answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And think, above all, of the example set by the Lord Jesus Christ himself of importunate prayer; and of its result in the happy success of his sufferings for the salvation of his people. Writing of him to the Hebrews, the apostle says,† "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared: though he was a Son, yet learned

* Matt. xv. 22-28.

† Heb. v. 7.

he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Think of these examples, and rest assured that, if you follow them, your success will be the same.

Suffer me now, in conclusion, solemnly to ask, Are you given to such importunity in prayer? I do not ask whether you ever pray at all in any way, for, it is hardly to be supposed that any of you are altogether strangers to every mode of prayer. It is to be feared, however, that there are many of you who are, in various respects, strangers to a right spirit of prayer, and in particular, to that spirit of importunity which this passage enjoins. Do think how it is with you, in the closet, in the family, and in the house of God; and see whether you be not habitually and grossly deficient in this duty. If you are conscious that this is the case with you, apply to God for forgiveness, through faith in his Son's atonement, and seek the regenerating and converting grace of the Holy Spirit. Something more than a mere exhortation to this particular duty of prayer is necessary for you, even a total change of state and of heart. "Repent and believe the gospel." Then there will be reason to say of each of you, "Behold, he prayeth." And, though you may not exactly feel that you can pray aright, yet pray as you can, and you may expect that the Lord will teach you to pray: pray perseveringly in the appointed way, and a better spirit of prayer will come, the Lord himself will pour upon you the spirit of grace and of supplications.

Let all truly pious and praying persons, also, be admonished of their duty in this respect. I hope it is needless to enlarge in order to convince you of your imperfection here, or of the sinfulness of a careless spirit in prayer, and the great injury your souls sustain from it. I am persuaded some of you are ashamed and grieved, when you think how far you come short in this duty. Be watchful, then, lest you turn more and more remiss. Consider well what your duty, and interest, and happiness require; and stir yourselves up to call vigorously and unweariably on the Lord. Be on your guard against worldliness, sloth, vacancy of mind, and all other hindrances to prayer; be frequent in your approaches to the throne of grace; and endeavour conscientiously to give yourselves to prayer, as often as you outwardly engage in it. Be circumspect and exemplary in your conduct, remembering that a consistent walk is necessary to a praying frame of mind, as well as very important in itself. Maintain an abiding and a deep sense of the necessity of the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable you to be importunate in prayer; and pray that he may help you to pray as you ought. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And be not discouraged, nor induced to desist, though the answer should be delayed; but persevere, and all

will be well. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it shall surely come, it will not tarry." Carry away from this passage, this resolution, in God's strength, that you will yet be more importunate in prayer. Pray for yourselves, and pray for others. Ask, seek, and knock. "Pray without ceasing."—"Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."—"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

LECTURE LVIII.

LUKE XI. 14-26.

“ And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake ; and the people wondered. 15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and a house divided against a house falleth. 18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out ? therefore shall they be your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : 22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusteth, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself ; and they enter in, and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

It is probable that Satan still exerts a baneful influence on men's bodies, though not in such a way and to such degree as to enable us to distinguish what is attributable to his operation from common disease : at all events, it is certain from the general tenor of Scripture, that his influence over the minds of men is still very great, though it is but little thought of by many. Now, the extraordinary and strikingly obvious way in which we read of his possessing the bodies of men, during the time our Lord sojourned on earth, is well calculated to bring home to us the conviction of the truth and power of invisible, satanic agency on the mind, as is the account we have of our Lord's dispossessing him from the bodies of men, to convince us of our Lord's ability and willingness to deliver our souls from spiritual bondage ; but we must not here enter at any considerable length into those points which are common to all cases of possession. We have already had other three cases* under consideration—the case of the man with the spirit of an unclean devil in the synagogue, the case of the Gadarene, and the case of the only son, whom the disciples could not cure. In considering this fourth case, we shall dwell chiefly on the circumstances which are peculiar to it, and to the passage connected with it, noticing, as we proceed, the spiritual improvement we ought to make of the different parts and observations introduced.

The case of this demoniac was very sad, for the devil that possessed him rendered him “ *dumb* ”—incapable of speaking and

* Luke iv. 33, viii. 26, ix. 37.

of hearing. When we look at the parallel passage in Matt. xii. 22, we find that the poor man laboured under the additional calamity of being "blind." This was truly a pitiable case, when he could neither speak to make his wants known to others, nor hear what was said to him by his friends, nor see to provide for himself.

But have we not, in the wretched condition of this poor man, a striking representation of the still more wretched condition in which all men are naturally sunk by Satan's spiritual reign of sin? They are dumb. The "tongue is the glory of man:" the faculty of speech is truly honourable and useful, when employed for the great end for which it was given—the glory of God; but, however voluble it may be on every other subject, it is naturally dumb as to every right expression of pious feeling. Not to speak of its too frequent use in blaspheming God, and opposing and misrepresenting the truth, it is habitually silent on the best of subjects. The unrenowned are dumb in prayer, strangers sometimes to its form, and always to its spirit. They are dumb as to religious conversation; they are "of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." It would be amusing, were it not so melancholy, to observe how, when in the midst of their vivacity and loquaciousness, any decidedly religious sentiment is introduced, the worldly part of a company are all at once struck dumb, and look as awkward as if they could neither hear nor speak. Man was intended to be, as it were, the mouth of this lower creation, that by him God might be praised for all: but when he is left to himself, this duty is neglected; and as to true praise, there reigns one unvaried and death-like silence. Men are also spiritually deaf by nature. They hear not the voice of God. They are even like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely. Men are also blind by nature—blind to their duty, blind to their true interest, blind to their true happiness, blind to the glory of the eternal God and of the blessed Redeemer, blind to the perception of all spiritual beauty.

Our blessed Saviour graciously interposed in behalf of the poor demoniac. He cast out the devil; and as soon as the cause of the disease was removed, the disease itself ceased, for "*the dumb spake,*" or, according to Matthew, "the blind and dumb both spake and saw." How great a deliverance was this! and what joy and gratitude must it have excited in him who was the subject of it! Similar, but still more important, is the change which divine grace makes on sinners. Though formerly dumb as to everything good, their tongue is loosed, and they speak plainly; they take pleasure in discoursing of the things of God and in pouring forth their hearts in prayer. Though formerly deaf, their ear is opened; they listen with delight to "the joyful sound;" they incline their ear and come unto Christ; they hear that their souls may live. Though formerly blind, the eyes of their understanding are opened to the spiritual world; though

once darkness, they are now light in the Lord. In such happy change, as well as in the miracle before us, the words of the evangelical prophet are fulfilled, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."

As might have been expected, when the people who were surrounding our Lord saw the poor distressed man cured by him in a moment, they "*wondered*." Matthew informs us that "all the people," that is, the body of the crowd, "were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?"—that is the Messiah, who was to be descended from David. This might have been a question of inquiry, or a question of affirmation. It is true that the impression now made on the multitude was, in most of them, transitory; but it was a correct impression, for they reasoned justly from the miracle before them. Should it be pretended that the common people were less able to judge, and more ready to be deceived than the Pharisees, who are immediately afterwards said to have expressed a very different opinion: it may be replied, that it was just the reverse; for, of a fact which was before their eyes, the people were of themselves as capable of judging as the scribes and Pharisees; and as to the conclusion to be drawn from that fact, the advantage was much on the side of the people, who were, in a great measure, free from prejudice, whereas the scribes and Pharisees were full of prejudice, and biassed by a regard to worldly reputation and interest. "So plain and easy was the way made to this great truth of Christ's being the Messiah and Saviour of the world, that the common people could not miss it; the way-faring men, though fools, could not err therein."* This truth was revealed to babes, while it was hid from the wise and prudent. Let us remember this. If we would attain to a saving knowledge and belief of the truth, let us cultivate a lowly, unprejudiced, and teachable spirit: and if we dread the most ruinous delusion, let us beware of prejudice, superciliousness, and pride.

Verse 15: "*But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.*" Matthew states that this was said by the Pharisees, when they heard the people saying, "Is not this the Son of David?" The Pharisees denied that he was, and endeavoured to account for his working miracles, without granting his Messiahship, by pretending that he wrought them by the power of Satan, with whom he was in league. On this, and similar passages, this very important remark has frequently been made on the evidences of Christianity, that by the two classes of infidels—the ancient infidels who lived in the time of our Lord, and the modern infidels—the two great points in the proof of the divine origin of the gospel are granted; namely, the fact of the miracles, and the inference from the fact; each

* Henry.

class granting that point of which it is respectively best qualified to judge. These ancient infidels, the Pharisees, allowed the facts, of which they were surely competent to judge, when they were done before their eyes; but they denied the true inference—they denied that these facts proved the divine mission of Christ. Our modern infidels, on the other hand, perceive that if they were to admit the facts, if they were to admit that these miracles had been wrought, they could not deny the inference of Christ's divine mission; and therefore, without combating the inference, they deny and set themselves to disprove the facts. But the ancient infidels were the best judges of the facts, and the conclusion thence arising in favour of the divine origin of the gospel is obvious to every unprejudiced mind.

As to the name here given by the Pharisees to the chief of the devils;—Baalzebub, or Beelzebub, is mentioned in the 1st chapter of 2 Kings as the “god of Ekron,” or the idol worshipped there. The word signifies the lord of a fly, or the god of flies; but why this idol came to be so designated is not agreed among commentators, though it was, probably, because he was imagined by his deluded votaries to be useful in delivering their country from swarms of flies, with which it was, at times, much infested. This name was at last applied by the Jews to Satan, the chief of the fallen angels.

Omitting, for the present, all consideration of the 16th verse, as it is the natural introduction to the 29th verse, we shall proceed to consider our Lord's reply to the blasphemous insinuation of the Pharisees. “*But he, knowing their thoughts,*” having a much more thorough knowledge of their sentiments than could be gathered from anything they had uttered, “*said unto them,*” replied in a way that met both their avowed and their concealed objections, “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth.*” When the inhabitants of a kingdom are all of one mind, and faithful to each other, it is astonishing what outward attacks they will withstand; but when they divide into parties, and begin to contend in civil discord, they are unable to make head against the common enemy. So also ruin is the result of discord in a house or family. Let this be a lesson to all the people of God to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let them hold to the truth, but let them not violently, relentlessly, or beyond what is strictly necessary, oppose each other. To see them thus unnaturally engaged, is a great triumph to the wicked, the worldly, and the erroneous. The enemy from without is emboldened to his fiercest attacks, while, instead of facing him, they are bent on overthrowing and exposing each other. “If ye bite and devour one another,” says the apostle, “take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

The application of this remark of our Lord's is thus made by himself to the case in hand: “*If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out*

devils through Beelzebub." If it was really so, as the Pharisees pretended, that the miracles were performed by Satan in league with Christ, then Satan's kingdom was divided against itself, for thus Satan would have been exerting his power, not only to set this particular person free from his dominion, but to confirm the whole doctrines and precepts of Christ, which were all directly opposed to the kingdom of Satan, and calculated and destined to overthrow it. Such a supposition, therefore, was quite inconsistent with the craft and sagacity of the devil, and was altogether untenable. On this we may remark, that however the children of the wicked one differ on other subjects, they are commonly very united in supporting their own worldly and sinful system, and opposing genuine, vital religion; nay, in this they sometimes find a bond of union, or of reconciliation, when they can find it in nothing else. When "Herod with his men of war set Jesus at nought, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him to Pilate, the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."

Our Lord goes on to obviate the insinuation, by another argument, verse 20: "*And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.*" By the sons, or children, of the Pharisees, we may understand their disciples, or those professedly belonging to their sect and following them, but not connected with Christ. We know that there were Jews who were exorcists, that is, who professed to be able to expel demons from possessed persons, and who proceeded, some of them by magical charms, and some of them by calling over them the name of Jehovah.* In Acts xix. 13, we read of certain Jews who went about from place to place as exorcists: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." The superstitious use, even of the name of Jesus, without faith in his power and willingness to heal, could not be expected to avail to a miraculous cure then, and cannot effect a spiritual cure now. These exorcists not only failed, but were attacked, overcome, and wounded by the demoniac. It does not appear quite certain whether our Lord meant to acknowledge that the sons of the Pharisees did actually work such cures, or merely to reason with the Pharisees on their own principles: in either way, however, the reference he made to the Jewish exorcists was quite conclusive against his opponents. It amounted to this, that the Pharisees, who were accustomed to consider their own disciples as exorcising in the name of God, should have applied the same rule to Jesus Christ, and not have rashly attributed his works of that kind to Satan; therefore, their own adherents were their judges—they furnished considerations to convict them of malicious partiality in this case. Thus it fre-

* Josephus, Justin Martyr, &c. Whitby on Matt. xii. 27.

quently happens, that, in their eagerness to condemn others, men advance arguments which, when correctly applied, condemn themselves. Let us avoid this, from a regard both to ourselves, and to justice to others; and, wherever there is room for a favourable construction, let us avoid rashly and uncharitably imputing the apparently good actions of others to improper motives and an evil instigation.

Verse 20: "*But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*" The expression, "The finger of God," was probably employed in allusion to the expression of the Egyptian magicians,* when they said, in reference to one of Moses' miracles which they could not imitate, "This is the finger of God." And the expression may be considered as teaching that the miracles were wrought by the power of God, and yet with the utmost ease; requiring (to speak after the manner of men) not the full strength of his arm, but only a touch of his finger. According to Matthew, our Lord said, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God." The agency of the Holy Ghost is to be especially acknowledged in Christ's miracles; and it was this which constituted the imputing of them to Beelzebub the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the agency of all the three persons in the Trinity was here; for, Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But, if it was so that Jesus' miracles were performed by divine power, then the conclusion was inevitable, that he was Messiah, and that the kingdom of God, the gospel dispensation, was come. This is, indeed, the grand conclusion to which his miracles should lead us; and, while we admit it in theory, let us see that we follow it out in fact, by the cordial reception of all the doctrines he teaches, and the actual obedience of his holy commandments.

Verses 21 and 22: "*When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*" The meaning of this, in the literal sense, is very obvious. So also is its application to this particular miracle; for, the overthrow and expulsion of the evil spirit proved that Jesus was stronger than he. But our Lord here evidently leads us on to consider the deliverance of the soul from the power of Satan. Satan is well compared to "a strong man." He was originally one of the holy angels, who are said to "excel in strength;" and though fallen he is still very formidable. He is "the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name, in the Hebrew tongue, is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue, hath his name Apollyon," that is, the destroyer. He is called "The dragon, that old serpent, the devil," and "The god of this world." Again, the heart of every unconverted person is Satan's palace; there he dwells, and there he rules; he is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience,"

* Exod. viii. 19.

he has access to their hearts as he entered into the hearts of Judas and Ananias. As a strong man, he is armed—armed with his own power and wiles, and with the ignorance, error, prejudices, unbelief, pride, and lusts of his subjects, all which he turns to his own account. As a strong man armed he *keeps* his palace; once in possession of a human heart, he does all he can to maintain his hold of it. He defends it like a garrison; he fortifies it against God and Christ, that he may still keep it in an ungodly and careless state, and retain it for himself. While he holds the palace of the heart, all its powers may be called “his goods,” his effects, his possessions, as they are all employed in his service. While he holds it, his goods are “in peace.” There is, undoubtedly, often a kind of peace in unconverted men. They have a good opinion of themselves; they flatter themselves in their own eyes. They say to their soul, “Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” They say to themselves, “Peace, peace,” while there is no true peace. But, blessed be God! strong as is Satan, there is one who is stronger than he, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our deliverer. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the mighty God. “All power, also, is given unto him in heaven and on earth,” as Mediator. “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.” He is far stronger than “the strong man;” and whenever he attacks, he overthrows him. He has already gained the great and decisive victory from which his enemy cannot recover; “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.” So, in consequence of his superior strength, he still gains the victory for his people, when they confide in him. In the language of John, “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” And, however confident “the strong one” may be in his armour, the stronger than he wrests it out of his hands, and turns it against him. Does the devil strive to keep Christ out of men’s hearts, and to preserve his own influence over them, by the weapon of ignorance? Christ wrests it from him by letting in a stream of light. Does he strive to hold them fast by error? Christ causes them to know the truth. Does he keep them by pride? Christ humbles them:—by unbelief? Christ bestows on them the grace of faith:—by the love of sin? Christ renews and sanctifies them. Satan may vary and prolong the struggle, but he is foiled at last. The spiritual weapons are mighty through God to the

pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Jesus prevails, takes possession of the citadel of the heart, and drives out the usurper. Then "he divideth his spoils;" he takes possession of them for himself; all the endowments of mind, or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin, and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him; yet that is not all—he makes a distribution of them among his followers, and having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.*

Having thus adverted to the great contest which is carrying on between sin and holiness, Satan and Christ, our Lord proceeds to teach that, in the contest, he does not allow of any neutrality. "*He that is not with me,*" says he, "*is against me.*" We formerly noticed the consistency of this declaration with that in the 9th chapter and 50th verse: "*He that is not against us is for us.*" In that case, our Lord was speaking of one who, in the midst of much imperfection, had a true regard for him, and would not lightly speak evil of him, and who, therefore, was to be acknowledged, in so far as he supported the cause of the Gospel. But here, Jesus is speaking of those who slighted his miracles, and rejected his doctrines, and of those, too, who, in such circumstances, would not distinctly and boldly take part with him: all such, it is plain, must have been against him. And, in much the same sense, he adds, "*And he that gathereth not with me scattereth;*" that is, probably, He that does not endeavour with me to gather subjects into my kingdom, does, in effect, drive them away from me. Let us mark, here, the absolute necessity of taking our part decidedly with Christ, if we hope to be sharers of his kingdom. We cannot serve God and mammon. If we seek to be neither for Christ nor against him, he counts us among his enemies. Let us not halt, then, between two opinions. Let those who have not yet declared for Christ now avouch him for their Lord. And let those who are on his side think, not only of their state, but of their habits, and let them remember that they cannot innocently remain neutral where duty is clear, or stand aloof when the Saviour is mustering his friends; and let them remember that when they are not doing good, they are doing evil. The complete sense seems, then, to require us to conclude, that if even those who do not appear professedly with Christ are against him, much more so are his avowed and daring opposers.†

The remaining verses run thus: "*When the unclean spirit is*

* Henry.

† Cicero thus addresses Cæsar: "We have heard you say that we reckon all those our enemies, except those who are with us; but that you reckon all those your friends who are not against you.—*Nos omnes adversarios putare nisi qui nobiscum essent; te omnes qui contra te non essent, tuos.*"—*Orat. pro Ligario, ad finem.*

gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. It is likely that something of this kind occurred in literal possessions ; that is, that an unclean spirit went out of a man, and returned again to torment him worse than before. But there would be a difference between his going out, as it is here expressed, and his being cast out. When he went out, of himself, and for some malicious purpose, he might return again ; but, when he was driven out by Christ, he dared not return. Thus, we read in Mark xi. 25, that Jesus “ rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him.” Every such cure was a complete and lasting cure.

But it is plain that, in these three verses, our Lord had chiefly in view to direct our attention to a very common and delusive case, namely, *the case of a partial reformation, without thorough conversion.* The devil is called the “ unclean spirit.” as he is unclean ; that is, spiritually polluted, or unholy in himself, and as he seeks to sink men into similar pollution. We have already noticed that he worketh in all the children of disobedience, and we are now reminded that he sometimes withdraws for a season, so that the sinner appears to have escaped from his thralldom, and to be very much improved in character. The devil never can be at rest, or peace, anywhere, because he has departed from God, the only centre of rest ; but he is, if possible, more miserable than usual, when he is not employed in the work of corrupting others. In this his restless state, he is a true emblem of wicked men, of whom we read, “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea that cannot rest.” To gratify his malevolence, the devil returns to the house, or heart, which he had left ; and you observe, it is called *his* house, for it is still his property, it has not changed owners, though it has been standing empty for a short time. When he returns, he finds it “ swept ;” it is swept, or cleared of gross pollutions, and of scandalous offences ; but it is not thoroughly cleansed. It is swept, but not washed. It is even “ garnished,” or ornamented. It is, perhaps, ornamentally furnished with the decencies of life, and even with something of the form of religion ; but there is in it no true grace, no sincerity of goodness. All is appearance, not reality—varnish, not solidity—show, not substance. All is like the whited sepulchre ; therefore, Satan returns, and finds it still his own dwelling—a dwelling more fitted than ever for himself. And, when the unclean spirit returns, he takes with him “ seven”—that is a considerable number, a certain for an uncertain number—“ seven other spirits more wicked than himself :”—from which it appears that there are many fallen spirits, that they are of different degrees of wicked-

ness, and that they associate together in their diabolical schemes; "and they enter in and dwell there." The people of God cannot be finally overcome by Satan; but many of the characters here described are permanently possessed by him. Such relapses, after some partial conviction and reformation, were exemplified in Felix and Herod; and, it is to be feared, in Demas. "And the last state of that man is worse than the first." It is worse as to his sin, for his conscience is seared, and his transgression increased; and it is worse as to his punishment, for his hypocrisy and his relapse aggravate, not only his guilt, but his doom. In the language of Peter, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Though we have already noticed, in going along, much of the improvement to be derived from this passage, a few sentences are yet called for in conclusion.

Let us beseech you all to think, with deep seriousness and personal examination, of the view which this passage gives of *your state by nature*. You are naturally dumb, and deaf, and blind, as to spiritual things. Inquire, then, whether you have recovered the faculties of speech and hearing, and be using them in such a way as God requires. Inquire if you have recovered the faculty of sight, and are now blessed with spiritual discernment. If you think you have recovered these faculties, and if it be unquestionable that you do speak of the things of God in a certain way, and do know something at least of the theory of the gospel, consider whether the holy tenor of your actions be showing that your speech is sincere, and your light, or wisdom, from above. Do not hastily conclude that you are delivered from the evil one, merely because you feel nothing of that uneasiness and alarm which you may be ready to suppose his actual dwelling in you and working in you must necessarily occasion; for, remember this, that very generally, "when the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." It is possible you may be at peace, merely, because, like a dark and stagnant pool sheltered all around, your conscience has never been ruffled by any breath of celestial wind. There may be nothing to disturb the even tenor of your worldliness. Everything is quiet, when everything is going one way.

Think also, with the same seriousness and personal examination, of *several things which are here shown to be included in true conversion*. For example, the false peace of nature has been dissipated, that the true peace, the peace of God, that passeth

all understanding, may fill the heart through Christ Jesus. Satan is destroyed and cast out, so as no longer to bear sway over the soul. Christ, the king of glory, who is king by right, becomes king in fact, and reigns in the affections and lives of his regenerated people. Their eyes are open to see his glory, and their tongue is loosed to speak of his work, and to celebrate his praise. They are not only nominally and apparently, but indeed and in truth, brought over to his side. The palace has changed owners, and it is not only swept, but washed; it is not garnished with gewgaws, but adorned with every substantial excellence. There is a thorough change in their state, for they have passed from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance, and from a state of depravity and deadness, to a state of sanctification and newness of life. Think of all this, and consider how it is with yourselves.

Learn also here, *how true conversion is effected*; it is by the finger of God; it is by divine power, through the regenerating agency of the Spirit, and the redeeming work of the Son. This is, at once, most humbling and most encouraging. You cannot deliver yourselves from this wretched and polluting bondage, and this inability is the very climax and essence of your sin. The thought of this were enough to drive you to despair, were it not that, however strong your tyrant may be, the Redeemer is stronger than he. Look to Jesus, and he will rescue you. He has borne your iniquities, "Therefore will the Lord divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."—"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Believers! remember that, though you are delivered from the reign of Satan, he will still be seeking to obtain some influence over you. Though expelled, he will lie in wait for opportunities to steal back into the palace of your hearts. Though he cannot utterly overthrow you, he may annoy you very grievously by his assaults. He had the audacity even to attempt the Saviour himself, and he did succeed in greatly troubling Peter and Paul. Guard, then, every avenue to your hearts, lest he come and break in upon you unawares. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." When he returns to your palace, let him not find it empty; but let him find it completely occupied, full of all good—full of an indwelling Deity. Thus, there being no room for him, he will sullenly depart; and, though he come again, he will come in vain. The gates of hell shall not prevail against you. In due time, you shall be removed to the heavenly city, into which sin and Satan can in no wise enter; and you shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you.

LECTURE LIX.

LUKE XI. 27, 28.

“ And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.”

IN proof of his divine mission in general, and more particularly of his designation and ability to destroy, in every sense, the works of the devil, our Lord, as appears from the harmonized history of Matthew and Luke, had just cured a poor man, who, in consequence of a demoniacal possession, had been both blind and dumb. The Pharisees, however, when they could not deny the fact of the miracle, imputed it, with inexcusable obstinacy and monstrous malignity, to our Saviour's being in league with Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. Jesus then made a triumphant reply to this blasphemous insinuation, exposing the absurdities which it involved, and demonstrating that the legitimate inference from such a miracle was, that the kingdom of God, the reign of Messiah, was come. In addition to this, in a strain of illustration suggested, as it would seem, by the wonder which he had just performed, and with a particular view to his malicious accusers, Jesus was going on to describe the awful state of those who, notwithstanding some partial convictions and reformatations, and some appearances of religion, were still spiritually possessed by the wicked one—still unrenewed, and who, therefore, relapsed into greater iniquity than ever, so that their last state was worse than their first. “ *And it came to pass as Jesus spake these things*”—while he was proceeding in this strain of cogent argument, and divine admonition, “ *a certain*” believing and affectionate “ *woman*” was so struck, at once with the base and ungenerous aspersions which had been cast on him, and with the united attraction of his works and of his words, that, regardless of the scorn of the scribes and Pharisees, and bursting through the restraints of timidity and false shame, she rapturously and loudly exclaimed, from the midst of the crowd, “ *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!*” And who of the disciples that heard her, would not feel disposed to echo back the sound? or, what heart that has been touched by the Saviour's grace, does not still respond to the sentiment? At the same time, it is probably as necessary for us, as it was for his immediate auditors, to attend to his subjoined explanatory corrective, “ *Yea, rather, blessed are they*

that hear the word of God, and keep it." Let us consider, therefore, first, the woman's exclamation; and, secondly, the amendment our Lord made on it.

I. Let us consider *the woman's exclamation*: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!"

It is not to be overlooked, that, while this exclamation speaks directly of the blessedness of our Lord's mother, it does, though in an indirect, yet in a very strong manner, imply the blessedness of our Lord himself, the idea being that from him a blessedness was reflected on his mother. In this implied reference to the grace and glory of the Redeemer, as rendering him worthy of the highest honour and praise, there is nothing but what is altogether commendable and deserving of imitation. Well might the woman thus praise the Saviour; and well might the multitude, at another time exclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The time is assuredly coming, when, experiencing the happiness of his reign, all nations shall pronounce their loudest blessings on his name. Happy, meanwhile, every one of us who can heartily take up the sublime strain, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

It is obvious, however, as already hinted, that the exclamation was directly and chiefly intended to proclaim the blessedness of our Lord's mother. Neither is it, in this sense, to be condemned. Jesus himself does not deny, and we ought not to question its truth.

The happiness of parents is very much involved in the conduct and history of their children. The relation is most intimate and most tender. Their offspring are so closely entwined round their heart, as to occasion them, either most acute anguish, or most exquisite pleasure. How deeply parents are often grieved by the calamities, or the misconduct of their children, is exemplified in Jacob's grief for his supposed loss of Joseph, and in David's lamentation over the awful wickedness and actual destruction of Absalom. Both parents feel deeply on such occasions; but the maternal bosom is usually torn with peculiar pangs. In reference to the distress of mothers, on account of the impending calamities of their offspring in the siege of Jerusalem, our Lord said to the women who were bewailing and lamenting him as he was led forth to be crucified, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." On the other hand, how great the pleasure which accrues to parents from their children's virtues and successes! By these their parental cares are more than requited, and the smile of complacency is diffused over the face of their most advanced age. Truly and well does

Solomon teach and exhort, "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."—"Hearken," therefore, "unto thy father that begat thee; and despise not thy mother when she is old." It would be well (we may observe in passing) if this wise ordination of the Author of humanity were properly considered and improved by those whose parents are yet alive. Who would not, at least in principle, and who should not in fact, shudder at the idea of wilfully planting a thorn in the breast of those to whom, under God, he owes his being, and of bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Who would not desire to make glad those with whom his own welfare constitutes the fondest earthly wish? Who does not feel that it is a great addition to his own enjoyment of any success, that they also are to be cheered by it? When Epaminondas, the Theban general, gained the great triumph over the Spartans at Leuctra, he said, "My joy consists chiefly in knowing that my father and mother will hear of my victory."

Such is the general principle on which the zealous and affectionate woman founded the exclamation under review; and it is a principle which recommends itself too readily to the feelings of the human breast to require any further illustration. But, if it is thus a general truth that parents are happy in the happiness of their children, how great must have been the happiness of such a woman as the Virgin Mary, in having such a son as Jesus Christ! Vast indeed were the blessedness and the honour which were hers. Never was woman so highly honoured, as she was in being selected from among the millions of her sex to be the mother of the greatest and best Being this world ever beheld—the mother of him who is styled the Consolation of Israel, the Desire of all nations, the only begotten and beloved Son of God. In this she was blessed, truly blessed, and divinely pronounced blessed; and she foresaw that she was in all ages to be called blessed.* When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, he said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."—"Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called, The Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." In like manner, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, who had honoured her with a visit, "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?" On this, Mary herself thus took up her rejoicing strain, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the

* Luke i. 28, 42, 48.

low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

And, as Mary was blessed in bringing forth such a son at first, so she was blessed in his future character and exploits. She was blessed in his dutiful conduct as a son: for "he went down to Nazareth, and was subject" unto his parents. She was blessed in the progressive improvement of his human nature, for, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." She was blessed in the whole tenor of his holy life, as he was perfectly free from all taint of sin, and exhibited a pattern of every grace. She was blessed in hearing many of his delightful discourses, as she frequently attended his ministrations, and formed one of the many hearers who "bore him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." She was blessed in seeing many of the wonderful works which he performed: for on many other occasions of this kind it might have been said, as it was said on that at Cana in Galilee, that "the mother of Jesus was there." She was blessed in the knowledge of the great work which, in every part of his eventful history, he was successfully employed in prosecuting—the work of promoting the glory of God, in connexion with the redemption and eternal happiness of sinful and perishing men. She was blessed in his glorious resurrection and ascension, when he rose a conqueror over death and hell, and when he was taken up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to wait till all his enemies be made his footstool. There she still continues to be blessed in contemplating his blessedness, and in hearing the blessings which are multiplied on his name. It is no great stretch of imagination to suppose that by some of the glorified, who may meet her in heaven, where the Redeemer is beheld enthroned with the Father, she may be occasionally addressed in some such language as this, "Hail, Mary, thou art highly favoured. The prosperity of every son gives joy to his mother's heart; but what mother's son was ever exalted so high as thine? Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

Having thus considered the woman's exclamation, let us consider,

II. *Our Lord's amendment on it*: "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

We have already noticed that, in this, our Lord does not contradict what the pious woman had said. He only modifies and explains it, and makes an addition to it. He allows that there was much truth in it, when properly understood; but he directs his hearers to something still more important, and to a blessedness still more complete. Now, his amendment on the woman's words teaches us,

1. *That the happiness of Mary herself consisted rather in her being a believer in Christ, than in her being the mother of Christ.* Great

as was her happiness in being his mother, it was by no means unmixed with circumstances of a painful nature. It was indeed a high honour to be the mother of that child who was called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace:" but, though the stateliest palace, and every possible attendance, would have been too mean for such an event, she was necessitated to bring forth her son in a stable, and to cradle him in a manger. Nor could her alarm and fatigue have been slight, when, soon after his birth, she was compelled to flee with him into Egypt, because "Herod sought the young child to destroy him." His devotion to his heavenly "Father's business" occasioned her great uneasiness, when, at twelve years of age, Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and when she and Joseph "sought him sorrowing." Nor can there be a doubt that she was often much distressed by the various hardships and indignities of his subsequent life. But all the other sorrows which arose from her relation to him, were greatly surpassed by those which flowed to her from his last sufferings and death. When we consider what the death of crucifixion was—how it was everything that was ignominious, painful, lingering, and accursed; it is truly affecting to think that the mother of Jesus stood by his cross while he was suffering,* and that, too, so near, that he not only saw her, but spoke to her. The scene must have been inexpressively agonizing, and like a dagger to her heart. It was in allusion chiefly to this that Simeon said of Jesus to Mary, in the temple,† "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against: yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Instead, then, of being calculated to fill her with unmixed joy, the history of her Son included several events so painful, that nothing but a principle of faith founded on some idea of the blessed consequences which they were to subserve, could have supported her mind under them.

It is true, as we have already seen, that there were many circumstances in her Son's history which were, in themselves, very delightful; but it is certain that whatever of real honour and pleasure she derived from these, was dependent on her faith. This must be apparent, when it is considered that if she had been an unbelieving and unholy woman, her intimate relation to Jesus, and her many opportunities of intercourse with him, which might have been turned so much to her advantage, instead of contributing to her blessedness, would have added greatly to her guilt, and disgrace, and ruin. By ministering, however, to her faith and holiness, they ministered also to her true happiness. But, however great her happiness thus unquestionably was, she enjoyed much greater advantages, and was, of course, much more blessed, as the Redeemer's disciple, than as his mother. Our Lord teaches this in the words under

* John xix. 25.

† Luke ii. 34.

consideration. Nor ought it to escape observation, that in what Elisabeth said to her respecting her blessedness, another part of which has been already quoted, a prominent place is assigned to Mary's faith.* "Blessed is she that *believed*: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." The obvious truth is, that Mary could have derived no spiritual advantage whatever from Christ, in consequence of being his mother, but that the most precious spiritual blessings flowed to her from him, in consequence of that faith of which the tenor of her words and actions furnished most satisfactory evidence. She was thus united to him by a much more important tie than the tie of nature; for this alone it was that constituted her *saving* connexion with him.

We are here further taught, in the 2d place, *That all true believers, as such, are more blessed than Christ's mother, as such.*

In his annunciation of this truth, our Lord introduces a description of believers, or true Christians, to which we must shortly advert:—they "hear the word of God, and keep it." "The word of God," in its most extensive sense, includes the whole of revelation; but here, as in other places of the New Testament especially, it seems to signify the gospel, or that part of revelation which most directly unfolds the way of salvation. Thus it is said† that multitudes "pressed upon" Christ, "to hear the word of God." Now, it is no small advantage to have the opportunity of hearing the word of God, even with the outward ear: and yet, it cannot be said that all who thus hear it are truly "blessed," for there are many who thus hear it, but who pay no attention to it, or reject it. "They seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. For their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted." The hearers, then, who are blessed, must be those who hear attentively, believingly, and obediently. Thus, Jesus says, "He that is of God, heareth God's words."—"My sheep hear my voice, and follow me." They "hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit." Such were the Thessalonians, who, "when they received the word of God which they heard, received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." But Christians are here also said to "*keep*" the word of God. They are not inconstant. They are "the good ground" hearers, who, "in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." They keep it, both in their faith, as the ground of their hope, and in their practice, as the rule of their life. They "hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end." They "keep God's commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And

* Luke i. 45.

† Luke v. 1.

this is his commandment, that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave them commandment."

Persons of this character are here declared to be more blessed than even the Virgin Mary was, merely as the mother of our Lord. Was she honoured in her maternal relation to him?—they are all connected with him by a still closer relation, even by that union in consequence of which he and they are said to be one. Thus, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, he said, "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Had she much pleasant intercourse with him as his mother?—their communion with him is still more delightful, for their "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," who "dwells in their hearts by faith." This communion, too, is not like the communion which consisted in being related to him, or knowing him, after the flesh, for that was withdrawn, when it became expedient that he should go away, and when he left his affectionate mother and all his sorrowing disciples behind him: but, as this is a spiritual, so it is an abiding communion, in respect of which he is with his people always, and never leaves them, nor forsakes them. In short, they are blessed with all those spiritual and saving blessings to which Mary, merely as the mother of Jesus, could never have attained. They are blessed with light, pardon, sanctification, comfort, and every present privilege; and all these are sure pledges of the everlasting blessedness of heaven. Their present happiness in the knowledge, belief, and obedience of the gospel, is thus described by the Psalmist: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." And their blessedness in respect of future stability, and final and complete salvation, is thus described by our Lord: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death."—"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Thus, all believers, as such, are more blessed than the mother, and it may be added, than any of the relations of Christ, as "according to the flesh." Those of his relations, indeed, who heard and kept his word, were highly blessed and honoured: their consanguinity, however, gave them no prefer-

ence as to divine acceptance and salvation ; for, as to every thing of that nature, all who were equally faithful and obedient, were regarded by him with equal affection. All this is beautifully and impressively taught in the following passage :* “ While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

There is still another idea included in this amendment of our Lord's ; for, in its most extended meaning, it states a comparison, not only between the advantage of true religion, and that of having been the mother of Jesus, but also between the advantage of true religion, and all other advantages whatever. We are here taught, then,

Lastly, *That those who are believers, are more blessed on that account, than on any other.*

If, my friends, you really know, and believe, and obey the gospel, then, however blessed you may be in other points of view, we hesitate not to say, “ Yea, rather blessed are ye because ye hear the word of God, and keep it.” We pronounce you far more blessed on this account, than you are or can be, on account of any *worldly advantages*. Are you *rich*? or, at least, in easy circumstances?—then it is true that you may be, in some degree, happy in freedom from anxiety about your temporal wants, and in the moderate enjoyment of earthly good: but what are such possessions, in comparison of your spiritual treasures, the unsearchable riches of Christ? “ All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.” Other possessions are uncertain and temporary, for they may leave you soon, and, at all events, you must be taken away from them: but yours are the better, the “ durable riches;” yours is the “ inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away.” Will you, then, “ set your eyes upon that which is not? for, riches certainly make themselves wings: they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.” Rather say, “ The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver:” and be studious more and more to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Are you *learned* in human knowledge?—so far well, for therein you may find much rational enjoyment. But rather blessed are you because you are taught of God in the wisdom which is from above, and instructed to know the Holy Scriptures, which have proved sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

* Matt. xii. 46.

Continue, therefore, to cultivate this wisdom as your most delightful and most profitable study. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." On earth, "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace:" and in heaven, those who are thus "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." Are you in possession of the *esteem and love* of the wise and good?—you have cause to rejoice, for, "a good name is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favour than silver and gold." But much more are you blessed in being honoured and beloved by the living God, who says to every child of his own, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Seek, then, above all things, "the honour that cometh from God only." Are you possessed of some *power* in the world?—this may be useful. But it is of much more importance to you that you have power to "rule over your own spirit," that you have obtained a victory over sin, nay, that, as princes, you have "power with God and have prevailed." Rejoice, then, in this ennobling power; "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," and you shall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Are you blessed in the enjoyment of that *liberty* and all those immunities which are the birthright of every native of this happy land, on whose soil, when the slave plants his foot, he from that moment becomes free?—how little would that freedom avail you, if you had not recovered yourselves out of the snare of the devil, and were still of those who are taken captive by him at his will! But you are emancipated from sin, from Satan, and from a spirit of legality, and bondage, and terror; and you are blessed in all the immunities of the citizens of Zion. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage:" for thus, "being made free from sin, and having become the servants of God, ye shall have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Are you in bodily *health*?—the blessing is great. But it is a still higher cause of congratulation that you have been directed to the Physician of souls, by whom, when your spiritual cure is completed you shall be brought to that healthful country, where the inhabitant shall never say, "I am sick; because the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity." You rejoice, and it is right that you should rejoice, in the blessing of temporal *life*: for "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" "skin upon skin"—one part of his property after another, "nay, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." You cannot live here, however, always. Temporal life, at best, is but a vapour; and when it is spent in a state of alienation from God, it is a prelude to the second death. But you are quickened into spiritual life, which will ripen into life that never ends. This divine life, then, you should most fondly cherish: and you should often be saying to its Author, "Because thy

loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise-thee." But we may go farther than this, and say, that those who hear the word of God and keep it, are blessed, even though destitute of any worldly advantages, rather than if, in a state of irreligion, they were possessed of them all. Nay, believers are not only blessed in their faith more than in any other blessing; but they are highly blessed notwithstanding of all worldly troubles. There is here what may well cheer their minds in opposition to every disadvantage. They may be poor, despised, and distressed; but their principles enable them with readiness to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," and to "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures" of the world; for they "have respect to the recompense of reward." They know that it is better to suffer any thing here, than to come short of happiness hereafter;—better to enter into life halt, or maimed, or with one eye, than having two hands, or two feet, or two eyes, to be cast into everlasting fire. And even in the meantime, they are happier than they could be on any other principles. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, though all that the worldling calls happiness should have fled, they can still rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation. Let me, then, persuade you who hear the word of God and keep it, that you are most blessed, and that you ought to be most thankful. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." A spirit of dejection ill becomes you. It is safe and meet for yourselves, and it is due to that God who makes and who pronounces you blessed, that you should actually be, and appear to be happy, and that you should now rejoice in that in which you are to rejoice for ever. It is quite within the bounds of truth, then, to say, that those who hear the word of God and keep it, are more blessed on that account, than on account of any worldly advantages.

It is, however, still more exactly in accordance with the spirit of this amendment, to remark that those who are believers are more blessed on that account than they are, or can be, on account of any *outward religious privileges*. Our privileges, in this respect, are great indeed. To have been born, not in any of the dark places of the earth, which are the habitations of idolatry, impurity, and horrid cruelty, but in a land of Christian light; to have in our own language the Word of God, that guide to a glorious immortality; to have our ministers, our Sabbaths, our sanctuaries, our sacraments, and all our means of conversion and edification:—these are valuable privileges, in consequence of which it may be said to us, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." But what did even the bodily presence, and teaching, and miracles of the Son of God avail the multitudes who would not hearken to him? Instead of proving a blessing, these privileges aggravated their guilt and condemnation. In like manner, it can be no cause of

congratulation to any, that, in this age and this quarter of the world, they are enjoying distinguished privileges, if they are failing to improve them. On such persons, the Lord Jesus, instead of proclaiming a blessing, may be considered as denouncing a woe. It was such conduct which, of old, called forth the unusual voice of his upbraiding:—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!"—"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."—"I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Is it not obvious, then, that it is the being enabled to improve these privileges, so as to hear the word of God and keep it, which constitutes the chief cause of happiness? To every one to whom these outward means have proved effectual for inward illumination and vital godliness, our Lord may be considered as saying, as he did formerly to the son of Jonas, "Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

It is thus, too, with regard to all those gifts, and attainments, and services, which are not the accompaniments of real piety, and of the belief and obedience of the truth. However great these gifts and attainments may be, they are of far less moment to their possessor than even the smallest portion of saving grace. However much, for example, a man's intellectual powers may be exercised on the subject of religion, however strong and retentive his memory, however uncommon his ability to speak and act; nay, however splendid the success which may attend his instrumentality: all these circumstances together do not constitute him a Christian; and, therefore, he has less reason to rejoice in them, than in those less dazzling, but more substantial blessings, of genuine piety, which are common to all the heirs of glory. We read, in the 10th chapter of Luke, that some time after our Lord had sent forth the seventy disciples to preach the gospel, and to work miracles, they "returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." On this, our Lord, among other things, said: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." It was not that these victories over Satan afforded no cause for joy: on the contrary, we are expressly told that "in that hour Jesus" himself "rejoiced in spirit." But he saw something not altogether right in the temper of the seventy, or, at least, some error into which they were in danger of falling. They were, perhaps, somewhat vain of their gifts, and in danger of placing them in the room of the graces of pardon and holiness; or, the celebrity which these miraculous powers had procured, was leading them, comparatively, to forget their own obligations to divine mercy. He therefore directed them to another and more solid cause of joy, namely, their own personal interest in electing love, and heavenly citizenship. We know that, at the last day, many will say to him, "Lord, Lord, have

we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" to whom he will profess, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." And we also know that he will welcome to his heavenly kingdom the humblest and weakest of his loving and obedient people. There can be no doubt, therefore, who are now to be pronounced "rather blessed."

The same holds true as to the being closely *connected with eminently pious persons*. By all right thinking men it must be felt as a call for much gratitude, and a source of great comfort, that they have been, or that they are, related to persons who, there is every reason to believe, are either arrived at heaven, or on the way that leads to it. The passage before us, however, lifts up a warning against building on such an advantage, to the neglect of personal religion. Surely, if any human relation could have saved any of the fallen race of Adam, the relation of Mary to Jesus, as his mother, must have saved her; but we have seen that it had no such effect, for she had her salvation from him, as her surety and her Lord, believed in and obeyed. It is also to be particularly remembered, that though Christ's mother was a believer, the generality of his near relations were not believers, for it is said,* "Neither did his brethren believe on him." Where is he, then, that congratulates himself on the piety of his parents, or children, or brethren, or any of his dear connexions, when to that piety he himself is a stranger? Dost thou not consider, O blinded man, that a parent's, or a child's, or a partner's, or a brother's, or a sister's, or a teacher's, or a minister's, or any relation's or friend's example, but example not copied—and advices and entreaties, but advices and entreaties disregarded—and prayers and tears, but prayers and tears uttered and shed, as for thee, in vain;—dost thou not consider that all these circumstances now prove thee to be inexcusably and deeply guilty, and are all registering to be brought forth against thee at the final reckoning? "When the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; and when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe:"—thinkest thou that any of these connexions will avail for thy safety and triumph in that day? Impossible! It will then be seen that, in consequence of thine own infatuated choice, thy intercourse with them is at an end, and all opportunity of thy being advantaged by them for ever gone by. And does thy heart sink within thee at the thought of being for ever separated from those who are so dear to it?—now is the time for taking steps to prevent so sad a parting. Now is the time, if thou wouldest be saved, I do not say by, but *with*, thy godly

* John vii. 5.

friends, now is the time to follow them—now is the time to “take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew,”* of him who is a believer, a Christian, and to say, “I will go with you, for I have heard that God is with you.” If this be neglected till the trump of God shall have awakened thee from the dust, and summoned thee before the judgment-seat, it will be too late for thee to think of it then. Vain will then be the attempt to take hold of the skirt and to implore the help of any of thy pious friends, that with them thou mayest be borne aloft to bliss: for, while they are caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the sky, thou shalt sink down by thine own weight—a leaden weight of impenitence and of despair. Happy, thrice happy they, who are knit together by those ties of grace which shall only become closer and more endearing, when all earthly ties shall be loosed, and when they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels in heaven! Blessed in that they have religious connexions, they are far more blessed in that they themselves are kindred spirits with them in Christ; for thus they form part of the most noble of all families, and thus they have, and ever shall retain, God for their Father, Jesus Christ for their elder brother, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter, and the whole saints and holy angels for their companions in all the blessedness which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him.

We shall now advert to two points, in concluding.

First. This passage, taken as a whole, teaches us *right views of Mary, the mother of Jesus*. In conjunction with other passages of sacred writ, it establishes her claim to be thought of with pleasure, to be imitated in various respects, to be spoken of with the regard which is due to a holy and honoured human being, and to be called blessed. It would be quite unscriptural not cheerfully to allow all this; and those who deny it fall into the extreme of disrespect. At the same time, there is another extreme which is here guarded against, and which, while it is more dangerous in itself, has unhappily obtained a most melancholy prevalence among many who bear the Christian name—the Popish extreme of exalting her to a participation in that worship which is due only to the Deity, and in that intercessory work which is performed only by her Son. Not to insist on the excessive length to which this absurd superstition has been carried in the variety of strange inventions which have been foisted into her history, and in the almost endless repetitions of the Ave Marias and other addresses, which, pervading the worship of the Papists, appear in a most extravagant light in what they call the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin: the leading principle, that she is to be applied to, to intercede for us with her Son, that he may intercede for us with God, is, in respect of Scripture, utterly baseless, and in respect of reason, utterly absurd. Nowhere does Scripture hint at her, or any

* Zech. viii. 23.

other person in heaven, being applied to, to intercede for us with Christ; but everywhere does it teach us to go directly to Christ, and to Christ alone, to intercede for us with the Father. Mary was a mere woman, possessed only of human power; nay, she was a sinner, though a sinner saved by grace: how then can she have influence, or merit, or any store of grace, or be any channel of grace, for the salvation of other sinners? That the angel should address her, when actually present, in the words, "Hail, highly-favoured," was quite natural and becoming: but for any to fall down on their knees, and address her, "Hail, Mary," now that she has left the world, is doubtless very absurd and unscriptural. To suppose that she can now see and hear her votaries on earth, is very irrational: but, as it is supposed by multitudes that she does see and hear them, while they invoke her in every quarter of the world, this is to ascribe to her the divine perfections of omnipresence and omniscience, and no sophistry can so explain away this, as to free them from the charge of idolatry. It is the more incumbent to speak out plainly on this point, as the superstition, in conjunction with a kindred train of errors, still bears over the minds of its adherents an unmitigated sway. Let us commiserate those who are thus blinded; and let us employ all scriptural means that they may be brought unequivocally to hold that, as there is but one God, so there is but "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," and honestly to renounce all trust in the merits of creatures, and to look for acceptance only in the Beloved. At the same time, let us look also to ourselves, and beware of every sentiment which stands in the way of faith and holiness—in the way of a hearty submission to the gospel. The spirit of will-worship, and of false trust, is characteristic of our fallen nature. To what device will not men repair, when left to themselves, rather than come to Christ? To angels, to Mary, to saints real and saints imaginary, to consecrated relics and consecrated places, to holy water and holy wells, to long prayers and many prayers—to a variety of works, some of which are materially good and others materially evil—to stations, and pilgrimages, and mortifications, and horrid cruelties, and human sacrifices—in short, almost to any thing will men resort, as a ground of hope, except to the blood of Christ alone, and as a rule of life, except to the precepts of Christ alone. "Brethren, these things ought not so to be." Let right views of Mary's history, contrasted with the corruptions which have been ingrafted on it, put us on our guard against this spirit.

Finally, *As we have the opportunity, let us make it our habitual study to secure that greater blessedness of which our Lord here speaks.* We may be ready almost to envy those who had the honour to be allied to the Saviour, or the privilege of seeing and hearing him: but we need not: for, the advantages of which we are called to partake are far greater. It is the spiritual, and not any natural relation; it is the looking to Jesus with the eye of

faith, and not with the eye of sense ; it is his speaking to our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and not his speaking to our ears by his human voice, which can prove the means of conversion and edification. Those who were personally acquainted with him when on earth, were soon obliged to say : “ Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” But he is ever near to his people, in his saving offices, as revealed in his word. “ The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring down Christ from above ;) or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith which we preach : that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” This word we are called on to hear and to keep. If we do not, God will require it of us ; but, if we do, nothing more will be needful for our happiness. There will be no need for us to regret that we are of Gentile extraction, or that Jesus never trode our native soil, or that he left the world before we came into it. There will be no need for us to ask, with Thomas, to see the print of the nails, or the wound of the spear : for, interested in an ever-living and ever-present Redeemer, and accustomed from the very heart to address him as our Lord and our God, we shall have the blessedness of those who have not seen, and yet have believed, and we shall rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let us, therefore, seek to become partakers of this blessedness, if we have hitherto over-looked it ; and let us hold it fast, if it be already our own. Thus shall we be more blessed than tongue can tell, or heart conceive. We shall be blessed in all our pious friends, blessed in all our religious privileges, blessed in all the height of our enjoyments, blessed in all the depth of our sorrows, blessed in life and in death. Nay, all this is but little in comparison of what a God of love will do ; for, when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away ; the song of our pilgrimage shall swell into the song of Zion, and the blessedness of time shall usher in the blessedness of eternity.

LECTURE LX.

LUKE XI. 29-36.

“ And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater man than Jonas is here. 33. No man when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”

WE noticed, on a former occasion, that the 16th verse of this chapter was to be considered as the natural introduction to the 29th. The former is the demand, and the latter commences the answer to that demand; and they are brought close together in the parallel passage in the 12th chapter of Matthew, beginning at the 38th verse. In the 16th verse of this chapter, we read, “*And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.*” Matthew says, that “certain of the scribes and Pharisees” made this request. Dissatisfied with all the miracles he was working on the ground on which they were treading, they still desired something more, they presumed to dictate to him—they asked him to give them some sign, to show them some miracle “from heaven,” from the clouds, some celestial appearance. Perhaps they might think they were excusable in making this proposal by the example of some of the Old Testament prophets. Moses, for instance, “stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground.” Joshua “said, in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.” “Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitted before Israel.” Elijah prayed, “and the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the

wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench ;” and, on two different occasions, he called down fire from heaven to consume the company who came to apprehend him. Some of these examples may have occurred to the scribes and Pharisees. They, no doubt also meant to affirm that such a sign would be much more convincing than any Jesus had shown. Now, testimony was given to the divine mission of Christ by various signs from heaven in this sense, both before and after the period here referred to : for example, by the miraculous appearances and voices at his birth and at his baptism—by the voice from heaven, like thunder—by the circumstances of his transfiguration—and by the darkness at his crucifixion. There was no want, therefore, even of such signs. But he would not allow caprice to dictate to him. Besides, why should any miraculous appearance from the sky have been more convincing than the miracles he was working on the ground ? Would any thing of that kind have been such a triumph over Satan as the dispossession they had just witnessed, but with which they declared themselves dissatisfied ? Suppose Jesus had immediately gratified their unreasonable demand, would they not still have had something to object ? Might not the cavillers, who had already ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, the chief of the devils, have said that he occasioned appearances in the clouds by connivance with the prince of the power of the air ? When signs of this, or of any other kind, were demanded from wanton curiosity, or obstinate unbelief, or in order to tempt or try him, our Lord would not gratify any such useless and improper desires. Signs were granted, when they were asked in faith, for the confirmation of faith, to Abraham and Gibeon ; but they were justly denied to those who were prepared to look on their not being given as an apology for their unbelief.

Luke thus proceeds, in the 29th verse : “ *And when the people were gathered thick together,*” crowding round Jesus, probably, to see whether he would give a sign from heaven, “ *he began to say, This is an evil generation.*” According to Matthew, he added the epithet “adulterous ;” that is, they were a spurious and wicked race, as being greatly degenerated in character from what the descendants of Abraham ought to have been. When they said, “Abraham is our Father,” Jesus said unto them, “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” They were not at this time guilty of literal idolatry, which is commonly called adultery in the prophets, but they were guilty of unbelief and wilful sin, in various ways, and, therefore, they were not entitled to be considered as the children of God and of faithful Abraham. Their seeking such a sign, in such circumstances, was a proof that such was their character. Our Lord declared that “*no sign,*” of the kind they then so unreasonably demanded, should “*be given,*” to that evil and degenerated race. He went on, however, afterwards to work more miracles similar to those which he had already wrought : and he intimated that another

sign would be given them, of a different nature, namely, his own resurrection, which, being attended with the appearance of a descending angel, was a sign from heaven. This he here designates as "*the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas*" (says he) "*was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation:*" and the meaning is here fully brought out, in those additional words recorded by Matthew,* "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Observe how exactly the type and the antitype here correspond. Jonah, being cast into the sea, in order to save the lives of many others who were in danger of perishing in the storm, was received into the whale's belly, or rather, into the belly of a great fish, which he "calls the belly of hell," or of the grave: so, Jesus Christ, being put to death to save sinners from perishing for ever, was laid in the dark sepulchre. Jonah, in that dismal situation, comforted himself with the hope of deliverance, and looked again towards God's holy temple: so, it is said that Christ's heart rejoiced, and his flesh rested in hope, because God would not leave his soul in hell—would not leave him in the grave, or state of the dead, neither would suffer him, who was his Holy One, to see corruption, Jonah was delivered from his imprisonment, and brought safe to dry land: so Jesus was set free from the prison of the grave; God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish: so Jesus was the very same length of time in the heart of the earth. As our Lord was crucified on the day we call Friday, and rose on the first day of the week, which is the Christian sabbath, the time he lay in the grave included part of the day on which he was crucified, the whole of the following night, the whole of the second day and of the second night, and part of the the third day. Thus; counting inclusively, or taking in the two extremes, we should naturally say, in English, that he was three days in the grave. As to the expression, three days and three nights, that is a Hebrew form of expression meaning no longer space of time than what has just been stated. Our word day is put sometimes for the day as distinguished from the night, and sometimes for the natural day of twenty-four hours. But, as there is no one word in the Hebrew language which conveys the idea of a space of twenty-four hours, the Jews were obliged to use the words "a day and a night," Hence, their saying that anything happened after three days and three nights, as the literal rendering would be, was the same as if we said that it happened on the third day. This Hebraism, or Hebrew form of expression, would be used by Matthew, whether he had written in Hebrew or in Greek; for, it was a common practice to transfer an idiom from the former language into the latter. We

* Matt. xii. 40.

have a proof that this was the Jewish mode of speaking, in the Book of Esther: "Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king." Accordingly, it is said, that she went in "on the third day." And to complete the parallel, the type and the antitype corresponded in this, that as Jonah, after his deliverance, went and preached to the Ninevites, saying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed;" so Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, remained on earth forty days, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

This then, namely, his own resurrection, was the sign to which our Lord referred these captious people. It adds, also, to the importance to be attached to this, that he replied in the same way on another similar occasion, as we read at the beginning of the 16th chapter of Matthew. This sign, his miracle, actually took place, as foretold, in all its circumstances. And to this miracle the inspired preachers and writers were accustomed to refer, as the great proof of the Saviour's divine mission. Thus, we find Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, dwelling on Jesus' resurrection and ascension as the grand evidence to let "all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ:" and Paul teaching the Romans that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

What now (that we may not find it necessary to return to this first topic in the passage before us) is the improvement we should make of these two verses? Let us all beware of the fastidious and insatiable spirit as to evidence, which these unbelieving Jews here displayed. Unreasonable as the spirit was in them, it would be still more so in us now. It is natural to proud and suspicious men to prescribe to God what he should do; and then, if he do not proceed exactly as they have dictated, to make that an excuse for their unbelief and ungodliness. The evidence actually given of the truth of Christianity is more varied and more strong than could previously have been conceived; yet will sceptics pretend that there should have been more. There is abundance to satisfy every honest mind: and those who resist it, let them think as highly of themselves, or be as much applauded by others, as they may, are "an evil generation." Let us, then, "all beware, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief." Let us study all the evidences of the Gospel, and especially, the crowning evidence of the resurrection of Christ. Let us not expect, or desire, any more miracles, or more inspiration now; but let us follow up the miracles which God has already wrought, and the information he has already given. Instead of asking more evidence and more information, let us turn our undivided attention to the evidence and information furnished in the perfect Word of God,

and pray for grace to enable us to understand, believe, and obey it. If the means we already enjoy do not suffice to bring us to faith and repentance, no other would. "If we believe not Moses and the prophets," and, we may now add, Christ and the apostles, "neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

We shall next consider the 32d verse, which has a more immediate connexion with the type of Jonas than what is stated in the 31st verse: indeed, this is the order in which the subjects are introduced by Matthew.* "*The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*" From speaking of Jonah as a type, it was a natural transition to speak of Jonah as a preacher. The effect of his preaching is described in his 3d chapter, from the 5th verse to the end. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Thus, the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas; but the Jews did not repent at the preaching of Jesus Christ, though a greater than Jonas was there. Even as a man, Jesus was greater than Jonas, being perfectly holy. As a prophet, too, Jesus was greater than Jonas; for he was the chief of the prophets, even the Messiah. And as to his divine nature, no comparison could be drawn; for he was the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His preaching, too, was more powerful than that of Jonas, and the ruin he threatened was more terrible than the overthrow of a city. Still, the Jews, as a body, received him not, therefore, said he, "*The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment, with the men of this generation, and shall condemn it.*" Even then, the consideration of the repentance of the Ninevites in far less favourable circumstances, exposed the very aggravated nature of the impenitence of the Jews in the midst of all their advantages. And looking forward to the last day, when all nations were to stand before the judgment-seat of God, our Lord declared that, like what is said to find persons

* Matt. xii. 41, 42.

guilty by witnesses who stand up to give evidence before an earthly tribunal, the very appearance of the penitent Ninevites, whether they actually uttered anything or not, would be equivalent to an accusing voice. Indeed, persons may be said to condemn others, who in any way furnish matter and argument for their condemnation.

But, to apply this to ourselves—will not the men of Nineveh rise up in the judgment with us, and condemn us, if we continue unbelieving and impenitent? How much greater are our privileges than theirs were! If that heathen people, who had neither Moses nor Christ, who appear to have had only one preacher, and who had only a peradventure of safety to encourage them, turned at the voice which threatened temporal calamities: how inexcusable shall we be, who, in this country and this age, have both the law and the gospel, who have many preachers of righteousness, who have positive assurance of pardon, on turning to the Lord—how inexcusable shall we be, if we disregard such means of happiness, and obstinately rush on endless ruin! Let us think of the Ninevites now, and let us remember that we shall be confronted with them in the day of judgment. Let us think, too, how the Lord is speaking to us by the effects of his preached gospel in other places. Let us think of the converts who are making in the South Seas, in India, in Africa, and in other heathen lands, and of their exemplary demeanour; and let us beware lest, by our rejection of the light, we have reason to blush here, and lest we give occasion to them to stand up as witnesses against us hereafter. Let us practically remember the words of inspiration, “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

To the same purpose, though by reference to a different part of the Old Testament history, our Lord says, in the 31st verse, “*The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them; for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*” The account here referred to is in 1 Kings x. 1, &c. “And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon’s wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of

his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty: so she turned, and went to her own country, she and her servants."

The country here called Sheba is thought, by some, to have been the same with Ethiopia, in Africa: but there is better authority for considering it to have been a part of Arabia Felix, in Asia. This lay to the south, or south-east, of Jerusalem: and it might be called "the utmost parts of the earth," as it lay at a great distance from Jerusalem, as it bordered on the ocean, and was the extremity of the land in that direction, and also, as the Jews, at that time, knew of no land beyond it. Our Lord here declares that, as the penitent Ninevites, so the inquiring queen of Sheba, would condemn the obstinate Jews, to whom he addressed himself. She came from a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and carefully profited by it; whereas they, while they had Jesus preaching in the midst of them, were rejecting his instructions. The contrast furnished matter for their condemnation, especially when the superiority of Jesus to Solomon was taken into view. Though generally sparing in stating his own just claims, it was necessary that he should, on some occasions, speak out, as he did now. To omit every other consideration, he was greater than Solomon in respect of wisdom, for he knew all things. His wisdom was underived; he was the wisdom of God—wisdom itself. When we consider, on the one hand, that Solomon was an exceedingly rich and powerful monarch, and so wise, that there were none like him, either before or after him; and on the other, that Christ, notwithstanding all his humiliation, was "greater than Solomon,"* is not this a plain proof that Christ was more than man? that he was "God

* A greater, *μελλων*, something greater than Solomon, and a greater than Jonas. Classic authors frequently use the neuter gender in this way, when speaking of persons; and this is reckoned an elegance.

Nil oriturum alias, nil ortum tale fatentes.—Horace.

over all, blessed for ever?" In him were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and "he spake as never man spake." How inexcusable, then, were the Jews, in refusing to listen to him!

But this was also spoken for our admonition. Will not the queen of Sheba rise up in the judgment, and condemn those among us, who, amid all the facilities they enjoy, neglect the wisdom from above? The things which the Saviour spoke, the refusing to listen to which rendered the Jews so inexcusable, are written in Scripture, that the reading and preaching of them may make us wise unto salvation. There is, therefore, no outward difficulty in the way of coming to the knowledge of them. How does the conduct of the queen of Sheba, who came from so great a distance, and took so much pains to learn the wisdom of Solomon, condemn those among us who peruse not the Word of God, which contains a perfect revelation of the way of life, and which they probably have lying neglected in their own houses; or who absent themselves without cause from the house of God, which is near to them, and in which the way of life is proclaimed; or who, when present in his house, give no heed to the things which they hear, and from prejudice, or carelessness, continue in ignorance, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity! Consider this, you who are neglecting the wisdom of God which is brought to your very door, nay, which is now sounding in your ears. You have not, like the queen of the south, to undergo the fatigue, expense, and danger, of a long journey, in order to get within the means of grace, but they abound where your lot is cast. The blessings of salvation are brought near, and freely offered to you. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." A greater than Solomon is here still, even the Lord Jesus Christ—a greater in himself, a greater in the substance of his teaching, and a greater in the certainty and power with which he instructs. He can do much more than Solomon, for he can give you real saving wisdom—he can open your understanding. If, then, you are conscious that you lack wisdom, ask of God, who giveth liberally to all who ask, and who upbraideth not; and it shall be given you. It will not, indeed, be wise for you to spend your time, when you apply to him, in putting such "hard questions" as do not concern your salvation: but, however difficult any subjects may be that relate distinctly to your safety, holiness, and comfort, if you propose them to him by reading his Word, waiting on his ordinances, improving the knowledge you already have,

and praying to him for more full instruction, he will cause you to understand them all, in as far as is necessary. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto you as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

Let those of you who have derived any sanctified wisdom from Christ, seek more and more of it. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Contrive to bring your difficulties to him, and he will solve them for you. See, in Solomon, a beautiful, though certainly an inadequate, emblem of the glory of your Redeemer; and be gratified to think how the typical history of David's immediate son has been fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will be completely fulfilled, in him who is also the Son of David, but who is at the same time David's Lord. Accustom yourselves to look through the type to the antitype, when you sing, as in the 72d Psalm, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son."—"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."—"And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." Fulfilled, in part, in the gifts presented by the wise men of the East, and in the partial success of the gospel, these predictions wait for their complete fulfilment in the establishment of his universal kingdom. Be it yours now to admire, and praise, and obey him. You are to be congratulated who spiritually partake of "the meat of his table," and take delight in "the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers." Happy are ye his people, and happy are ye his servants, who stand continually before him, and hear his wisdom. Blessed are ye that dwell in his house, for ye will be still praising him. Bring presents to this King. Pour them out, and spare not. Give him all you can, give him your hearts, give him all you have, and all you are. You will be gainers by this; for he will give you, of his royal bounty, all you desire, and much more. He will do for you exceedingly abundantly above all that you ask or think. From listening to his wisdom, and enjoying his fellowship in his house below, return with cheerfulness and increased devotedness to serve him in your own place in society; and look forward to the time when you shall be admitted to dwell with him at his court above, and find, more than ever, that the report of his glory was a true report, nay, that the half had not been told you.

Verse 33: "*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light.*" We had very nearly the same words, in the 16th verse of the 9th chapter of this Gospel; and, in both places, the literal sense is too plain to require any illustration. The words, however, appear to be introduced with a different view on this occasion; for, whereas they were plainly spoken formerly in explanation of the conduct Christ expected of his followers, they seem here spoken to declare the conduct

he was to pursue himself. If we are to refer them to what goes before, as seems proper, the exact bond of connexion may be this: Though the Pharisees had displayed the greatest perversity in their unbelief, impenitence, and rejection of the wisdom which he taught, he was by no means, on that account, to desist from his work, but was to persevere in prosecuting his ministry in the same way; for he was like a candle or lamp, which, once lighted, was not to be hid, but to be kept in a conspicuous place, and thus, as he had formerly exhorted his disciples, he himself was to take every opportunity of making known and recommending the truth. He is often represented as the Light of the world. "John was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light; that was the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "I am the light of the world," said Christ, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Accordingly, our Lord went on to preach and to work miracles, though not according to the dictation of the Pharisees, yet in the way that seemed best to himself; and thus, the light of his ministry diffused itself distinctly throughout Judea. In obedience to his command, also, his apostles proceeded, after his death, to diffuse the light still more extensively. He has ordered that the gospel shall be preached to every creature under heaven: and he will be at last, in the most complete and most extensive sense of the words, "a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

But to come to ourselves—this light hath reached to us. We, a people who sat in darkness, have seen the great light; and to us who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. The light is not put into a secret place, nor under a bushel; but it is held up to the view of us all. The call is given in public, and aloud. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse." Is it not a great privilege to have this public warning, and this clear light? Let us consider what we are, and whither we are going. Jesus is, as it were, still saying to us, "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

The three concluding verses run thus: "*The light of the body is the eye: therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body, therefore, be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.*" In connexion with what our Lord had said just before, he here goes on to say, that it is necessary for men to have sight, as well as light. Be an object ever so interesting, and the light ever so bright, all will be to no purpose, if the faculty of vision be

wanting, or essentially defective. Now, these verses, in which Christ pursues this idea, are to be taken both literally and metaphorically.

Literally, or at least in relation to bodily sight, "the light of the body is the eye." The light is generally used, either for that which gives light—the luminous body, such as the sun, or a lamp; or, for that which, emanating from the luminous body, enables us to see objects: in this clause, however, it is put for the organ of vision. Or if we invert the order of the words, "The eye is the light," or lamp "of the body."

"When thine eye is single"—the word rendered single, strictly speaking, denotes that which is one in respect of number, or simple and uncompounded in respect of substance. As applied to the eye-sight, it signifies that it is clear, free from organic defects and vicious humours; in other words, that it is so perfect in structure and action, as to see objects, not dimly, nor confusedly, nor doubly, nor in a different size, or place, or colour from reality, but distinctly, and in every respect, exactly as they are. In such a state, the eye-sight is said, in a single word, to be good. When thine eye is thus single, "thy whole body also is full of light"—thou art completely enlightened in the literal sense, and able to go about, and to conduct all bodily and outward affairs, with safety and correctness. "Every object within the reach of the eye is then as distinctly seen as if there were an eye in every part. So the eye is to every part of the body what the lamp is to every part of the house,"* or room, when its bright shining gives light.

But, on the other hand, when the "eye is evil," that is, when the eye-sight is the reverse of single, or clear, or good; if the eye-sight be distempered, or, as we usually say, bad; in proportion to its deficiency will a man be involved in obscurity, and exposed to form erroneous ideas of external objects. No other part can supply the defect of the eye. And, if the eye-sight be totally and permanently gone, or altogether interrupted for a time, a man is left in utter darkness, the same as if there were no light shining around him at all, the same at mid-day as at midnight. It concerns a man, also, to "take heed lest the light that is in him be not darkness"—lest when he imagines he sees correctly, his vision be deceiving him; for, in such a situation, he would be ready to go on heedlessly, and would be in greater danger than if he had to grope his way with care in a state of conscious blindness.

When we turn next to the interpretation of these verses in the metaphorical or figurative sense, we find them fraught with deep and important instruction. If we put the understanding instead of the eye, and the soul instead of the body, we have at once the key to the spiritual meaning. We then say, taking the understanding in the most enlarged sense, and as including thought, reasoning, and conscience, the light, or the eye, of the

* Dr A. Clarke.

soul, is the understanding. What light is to the body, that knowledge is to the soul; and as the eye is the organ by which light is received for the guidance of the body, so the understanding is the faculty by which knowledge is received for the guidance of the soul. Therefore, also, when the understanding is single, that is, clear, sound—sound in itself, and sound in its actual exercise on the subject of religion, correctly apprehending and really receiving gospel truth—then the whole soul is full of light; the truth influences the whole sentiments, affections, and conduct.

But when the understanding is evil, when it is unsound, when it is warped by prejudice or passion, and when it thus leads to false conclusions, the soul is full of darkness—is in a state of spiritual ignorance, error, and depravity. It concerns a man, therefore, to take heed that the light that is in his soul be not darkness—that the principles he has adopted be not erroneous; for, if they be, he is more ready to go far astray in that state of fancied illumination, than if he were brought to a stand in conscious ignorance; and the more steadily and extensively he follows out these false principles, the farther he wanders from truth and duty into the mazes of delusion and wickedness.

Our Lord concludes with the idea, that when the whole soul is full of light, so as to have no dark corner in it—when it is correctly and thoroughly instructed, that is a most pleasant and desirable state, somewhat like that of being in an apartment which is thoroughly illuminated by a very bright candle or lamp.

As to the application of these last verses to ourselves:—While, as already noticed, we have the light of gospel salvation shining in great brilliancy around us, let us beware lest something voluntarily and culpably deficient in our mental vision prevent that light from shining into our hearts. Our bodily eye-sight, whether good or bad, is generally independent on the state of our hearts; but it is quite otherwise with our spiritual discernment, for here our wishes and aversions have a mighty influence, and there is room and need for exhortation and exertion. Let us beware lest, in this sense, our eye be evil, and the light that is in us be no better than darkness. A man's light is darkness when he is in radical error, and when what he reckons his chief wisdom is absolute folly. And here, let me put you on your guard against some of the multifarious causes of prevalent and fatal darkness in the midst of real outward and imaginary inward light.

Take heed of the great leading *error of the worldly*, who in their practical judgment, prefer earthly to heavenly things, and thus are involved in spiritual darkness. Take eternity into account, if you would estimate things according to their real value, and would think and act as well-informed persons.

Take heed of *shutting your eyes* altogether against the light, of averting your thoughts altogether from the truth, and of resolving to persist wilfully in ignorance. There are none so blind as those who will not see.

Take heed of *leaning to your own understanding*. There are some persons, who, being naturally uncommonly sagacious, or who fancying themselves so, are so wrapped up in self-conceit, as to undervalue the true light. Take heed of trusting in human learning, if you have had an opportunity of becoming learned. It is very melancholy that there are so many who rest in this to the neglect of the wisdom which is from above. Take heed of infidel and irreligious philosophy, falsely called philosophy: "Beware lest any spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Reason is a noble endowment, and its right exercise is incumbent, but there are false reasonings of which you should be aware. There are specious arguments by which men put light for darkness, and darkness for light, and by which, when they are led astray, there is nothing too unreasonable for them to be guilty of, even to the total rejection of the gospel.

Take heed of the pride of *self-righteousness*; for, it will blind you to your own demerit, and to the glory of Christ's finished work, and to the way of pardon and acceptance by faith alone. It will cause you to think that you are spiritually rich, and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing, not knowing that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

"Take heed and beware of *covetousness*," for it perverts the judgment and the affections. The love of money causes many "to err from the faith."

Take heed of the *love of sin* in general, and the indulgence of any particular sin. There can be no doubt that the love of sin exerts a fatal influence in perverting the understanding, and keeping men in darkness. There are many who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." If, therefore, you would have the true light illuminating your soul, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

Take heed of a spirit of *envy, malice, and uncharitableness*. This is called in Scripture an evil eye: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" said our Lord. The indulgence of this spirit shows that the true light has not entered the soul, and tends still to keep it out. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him: but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Take heed of unfounded *prejudice and partiality*: such a bias will lead you astray, and render your understanding as incapable of judging of truth as a jaundiced eye is of colours. Take heed of every sinister end, every improper design. This is, perhaps, peculiarly intended by an "evil eye." See that you have an honest, sincere, upright, single design. Let your aim

be the glory of God, in the way of your own salvation. Hypocrisy and duplicity must ruin both a man's principles and character.

Beware of the *delusions of Satan*, who seeks to keep you in darkness. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

And take heed of *not acting up to the light* you have received, for that is a sure way of relapsing into darkness. When those who "knew God glorified him not as God," "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Beware of all these things, else it will be said of you that "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Beware of all these things, lest you hear and not understand, and see but not perceive, and lest God, in righteous judgment, send you "strong delusion, to believe a lie." How dreadful if such your end! Think timeously of your danger. "Come forth, ye blind people that have eyes, and ye deaf that have ears."—"Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Study to be open to conviction. Read and hear the word with humility and submission. Earnestly and perseveringly pray for the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. "And may he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Finally, If God has given us any degree of that singleness of eye which admits the light of life into the soul, let us *improve that light and welcome it more and more*. Once darkness, but now light in the Lord, let us walk as children of the light. Let us act with a simplicity of holy intention; and let us "eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Sensible, too, of the dimness of our best views, let us use all the means in our power to get them cleared up; and, especially, let us wait on the Lord, and beseech him to guide us by his Spirit into all truth. Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift! open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Dissipate every cloud, take away every film, which would shut out the sight of thee. O brightness of thy Father's glory, who, from thy throne far above the cherubim, seest all the secrets of the great deep! thou true enlivening, unexhausted light, with which angels long to be illuminated, and spend glad ages in beholding! spring forth into our souls, and scatter the thick darkness there, that the brightness of thy love may shine and shed itself through every corner of our benighted hearts.* Amen.

* Augustine's Meditations, chap. xviii.

LECTURE LXI.

LUKE XI. 37-44.

“ And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him : and he went in, and sat down to meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter ; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also ? 41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have ; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”

As Luke is the only evangelist who relates the visit our Lord now paid in the house of this Pharisee, we know nothing of the man's character, or of the circumstances of the visit, beyond what may be gathered from this one account. We read, however, of the same objection which is here mentioned being raised against Christ and his disciples, and of his making similar statements in reply, on other occasions, to which it will be of use to advert.

This account is introduced with the words, “ *And as he spake.*” It is the opinion of harmonizers of the Gospel history, that this occurrence is not to be considered as introduced here in the exact order of time : therefore, the words, “ as he spake,” do not refer us to what goes immediately before, but merely intimate that what is about to be mentioned took place on one occasion as Jesus was speaking. While he was yet engaged in teaching the people, “ *a certain Pharisee*” came forward, and “ *besought,*” or rather invited, “ *him to dine with him.*” The Jews, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, had but two meals in the day—the one (to use the Greek words, for we have no English words altogether corresponding to them) was the *ariston*, which is rendered dinner, and the other the *deipnon*, which is rendered supper. They are both mentioned, Luke xiv. 12. “ When thou makest a dinner or a supper.” Their *ariston*, however, corresponded as nearly to what we call breakfast, as to what we call dinner. The word literally signifies, “ the first meat.” Josephus says* that the legal hour of the *ariston*, on the Sabbath, was the sixth hour ; that is, twelve o'clock at noon, according to our way of reckoning : and, though he does not mention the usual hour on other days, it was probably much the

* Life, sect. 54.

same. Speaking of his brethren,* Joseph said, in Egypt: "These men shall dine," or eat "with me at noon." Their *deipnon*, which is rendered "supper," was their chief meal. But, though the hour of it, no doubt, varied, it was by no means so late as our word supper might suggest, being eaten early in the evening, or after the heat of the day.

While our Lord was speaking, the Pharisee besought him to dine with him, it being the usual hour of dinner. Whatever may have been the motive which led the Pharisee to give the invitation, whether it proceeded from true hospitality and a real regard for Christ, or (as appears more probable when we consider the way in which our Lord conducted himself), from a desire to watch and ensnare him, our Lord accepted the invitation; probably, both that he might get that bodily refreshment which he, at the time, stood in need, and that he might have an opportunity of being useful: and it was the Pharisee's own fault, if the visit, with which he was honoured, did not issue in his spiritual benefit. Jesus "*went in*," and immediately "*sat down to meat*," without washing his hands, according to the custom of the Pharisees—for which, no doubt, every convenience was provided.

"*And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.*" He wondered inwardly, if he did not express his wonder in words, that a ceremony, which he considered so essential, was neglected by one who bore so high a reputation for religion. Due attention to cleanliness in every respect is very agreeable and commendable, and ought by no means to be neglected. But the Pharisees carried the custom of washing much farther than was necessary for the purpose of cleanliness, looking on it as a religious ceremony, and practising it with superstitious frequency. The most particular account of their practice in this respect, in Scripture, is thus given in the beginning of the 7th chapter of Mark: "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say with unwashen) hands," without washing their hands immediately before, "they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft," or, as some think the meaning is, with the fist, or up to the wrist, and with great care, "eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables," or couches, even though they be perfectly clean. "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread" (take their food) "with unwashen hands?" Ablution was, indeed, prescribed by the law of Moses, for doing away ceremonial uncleanness in certain cases; but

* Gen. xliii. 16.

that law contained no such injunctions as those here referred to. The Pharisees, therefore, and other Jews who followed them, rested the custom on the authority, not of the written law of Moses, but of the tradition of the elders. It was pretended that, at the same time when the written law was given by Moses, many other things additional and explanatory were revealed to him, which he did not commit to writing, but delivered orally to the elders, who handed them down, in the same way, from one generation to another. It was not till long after the time of Christ, that these traditions were committed to writing. At last, however, in order to prevent them from being lost in the dispersion of the nation, they were collected in what is called the Talmud. There are two works that bear this name—the Talmud of Jerusalem, and the Talmud of Babylon. Each consists of two parts—the one called the Mishna, which is the text; and the other the Gemara, which is the commentary on the text. The Jewish rabbies made the Talmud more a study than the sacred books; and dared to pronounce it of equal, nay, of superior authority. “The words of the scribes,” said they, “are lovely above the words of the law, and more weighty than the words of the law, or the prophets.”* A similar misplaced regard was given to the unwritten traditions, in the days of our Lord. He accused them, as we read in the 15th chapter of Matthew and the 7th chapter of Mark, of “transgressing the commandment of God,” and “making it of none effect” by their traditions—of “rejecting the commandment of God, that they might keep their own traditions.” And he gives a striking example of this, in that, while the law of God required children to reverence and assist their parents, and denounced the punishment of death on every child that should curse his father or mother, the absurd and wicked principle of the Jewish tradition relating to the positive obligation of all vows, secured the culprit in this way from punishment, and relieved him from all obligation to assist his destitute parents, if he had bound up his substance by a vow.

With regard to the traditionary custom of the needless, ceremonial washing before meat, the Pharisees considered it as a necessary and very efficacious rite, the neglect of which was most criminal. The Talmud declares that to eat bread with unwashed hands, is as bad as to break the seventh commandment. There is an account of one rabbi being excommunicated by the Sanhedrim, because he contemned this custom; and of another rabbi, who, “being in prison, and not having water enough both to drink and to wash his hands, chose to do the latter, saying, It is better to die with thirst, than transgress the tradition of the elders.” In fact, too many of the Jews placed the observance of this and some other ceremonies, which were either entirely of human invention, or perverted from the purpose for which they were

* Lighfoot and Whitby. The Talmud was printed at Amsterdam in twelve volumes folio.

divinely appointed, in the room of pardon through the Messiah, regeneration by the Spirit, and true holiness of heart and life, and thought that nothing more than these ceremonies was necessary to salvation. It is said that they were taught, and believed as follows:—"Whosoever hath his seat in the land of Israel, and eateth his common food in cleanness, and recites his phylacteries morning and evening, let him be confident that he shall obtain the life of the world to come."* You see, then, the hurtful effects of such a ceremony as this, when put in the place of true religion, and when enforced as binding on the conscience, though of mere human invention. Had this been a harmless custom, and left to be observed or not, as men pleased, our Lord might not have seen it proper to be in any way singular with regard to it; but when it usurped the place of a divine institution, and was put instead of deliverance from the guilt and pollution of sin, he would not countenance any such superstition.

Nay, he not only refused to comply with it himself, but administered a sharp rebuke to those who did. Not prevented by mistaken complaisance, he said to his host, with all faithfulness, "*Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and uncleanness.*" He would not be reckoned a cleanly servant who should attend to the outside of the cup his master drinks out of, and of the plate he eats his meat out of, but neglect to cleanse their inside: as little could they be reckoned spiritually clean, who attended merely to washings of hands and outward ceremonies, while they neglected the state of their hearts, continued under the guilt and pollution of sin, more particularly, were guilty of "ravening," or rapaciousness, or extortion, "and wickedness," or malice, for which vices many of the Pharisees were notorious. In the similar passage in Matt. xxiii. 25, our Lord said that they were "full of extortion and excess." They were careful to wash their hands before their meat, and to eat and drink out of newly cleaned vessels; but they made no scruple of seizing with guilty hands what procured their meat and drink, and then using them to excess. They contrived to maintain some reputation for sanctity, and to avoid gross sins in the sight of men; but they indulged inward iniquity, which rendered them abominable in the sight of God. In opposition to this mode of procedure, our Lord, according to Matthew, gave this direction, "Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also;" that is, as applied in the figurative sense, men ought to begin with purification of heart; for, if the heart be renewed and sanctified by grace, and brought under the regulation of proper principles, the life will be reformed of course. Out of the heart are the issues of life. When the fountain is pure, so are the streams. And, when the state and the motives are good, the outward actions are not only apparently good, but really good, and acceptable to God.

* Whitby on Mark vii.

But, to proceed to the exposition of the passage immediately before us: "*Ye fools!*" (for how inconsiderate and foolish were they in this!)—"*did not he that made that which is without,*" or the body, "*make that which is within also,*" or the soul? He formed man's body out of the dust of the ground, and also breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. God is called the "Father of our spirits," "the Lord who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." Now, from the fact of his being the Creator of the whole man, the Pharisees should have inferred and remembered, that he knew all that was in man. "Understand, ye brutish among the people," says the Psalmist; "and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"—"The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance" only, "but the Lord looketh on the heart." Whatever fair appearances, therefore, these Pharisees might have presented, the Lord could not but be much displeased, when he beheld the secret abominations of heart which they cherished. Hence, they should have concluded that, if they wished to be accepted of him, it was necessary for them to undergo an inward purification, and to cultivate the various graces, and discharge the various duties, of true religion and morality.

One of these duties our Lord particularly mentions, namely, that of charity. "*But rather give alms of such things as ye have.*"* He had just been accusing them of ravening, or extortion; of oppressing the poor to enrich themselves: and now, rather than that, or instead of that, he inculcates kindness to the poor by alms-giving. Immediate and direct restitution would be their duty in all cases where the extortion they had practised could be particularly ascertained; and where that could not be, the best way of disposing of their ill-gotten gain was to give it to the poor. But, however justly property may come to a man, alms-giving must not be neglected. "Give alms of such things as ye have; *and, behold all things are clean unto you.*" We cannot suppose that our Lord meant, by this saying, to teach that alms-giving was meritorious, or, in any sense, efficacious, to remove the guilt, or the pollution of sin: that would be to subvert

* Πλην τα ινεντα δεσι ελεημοσυνην. Τα ινεντα, "quæ insunt—those things which are in, or within." Raphaelius adhering very rigidly to the literal idea, has an elaborate note to show that this is an injunction to give of the drink and food which are in the cup and platter; and it is possible that this may be the exact meaning: yet even on this interpretation, this would amount to an expression, in a limited way, of what our English version expresses in a general way. Others are for rendering the phrase, "quod superest," or, "quæ supersunt—those things which are over, or remain, after what is necessary for yourselves. Some (among whom are Bos, Schleusner, and Doddridge) think that τα ινεντα is for κατα τα ινεντα, according to such things as are present, or as you have; in other words, in proportion to your substance; τα ινεντα being, as they think, the same with τα παροντα, or, τα παριχοντα. On the whole, our version seems a good one—"Such things as you have, or, as are in your power."

the whole scheme of the Gospel. But he here teaches that such charity is an inseparable accompaniment, and a necessary characteristic and proof of cleanliness—that is, of a state of spiritual purity, or holiness; and also that such an appropriation of part of a man's substance is essential to his rightful and pious enjoyment of the remainder. As applied to meats, the word "clean" signified to a Jew that they might be lawfully used. And it is probable that, in addition to a general reference of this kind, our Lord here alluded more particularly to the laws of the first-fruits, and of the tithes. The Jews were enjoined to present a basket of the first ripe fruits solemnly to the Lord, and also to give a tithe, or tenth part, of their increase to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and it was in so doing that the remainder was clean to them, and that they, proceeded by divine right, and could expect the divine blessing in the use of it.* So, it holds in principle universally, that men ought to acknowledge distinctly their obligation to God for all they have, both by thanksgiving in words, and distribution in alms-giving. Wherever this is done by renewed persons, from true scriptural motives, there, there is true piety; wherever this is neglected, or gone about hypocritically, there, there is nothing but impurity. "Unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but, even their mind and conscience are defiled." God's believing, pardoned, and renewed people have the sanctified use of all things; but the unbelieving and impenitent are sinning, even when they imagine that they are serving God; and whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do in common life, they only pollute and profane everything they taste or touch.

Aware how little the Pharisees were inclined to follow the excellent advice which he had just given them, our Lord proceeded faithfully to warn them of their danger. "*Woe unto you Pharisees!*" The wrath of God was suspended over them, and would soon bring on them the most awful misery, unless they repented. "*Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God.*" They were scrupulous in paying the tithe, even of the most trifling garden herbs, in order to obtain the reputation of conscientiousness and sanctity with the priests and the people, and foolishly supposing thereby to recommend themselves to the divine favour; while they neglected the practice of righteous judgment to their fellow-creatures, the exercise of love to their Creator, and, indeed, all the weightier matters of duty, as if they had been unnecessary. But does our Lord condemn them for this exactness in these smaller matters? He does not? "*These,*" namely, the more important duties, "*ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*" They were expressly enjoined to give the tithe of all the increase of their land; and, therefore, exactness in this respect was commendable. And so

* Deut. xxvi.

universally, nothing that God hath commanded should be neglected, under the pretence of its being of small importance. Every duty, be it what it may, acquires importance from the very circumstance of its being a duty—of its being divinely enjoined; the observance of it, from right motives, is an honouring, and the neglect of it is a despising of the great Lawgiver. In the words of Jesus, “Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” In attending, however, to comparatively minute things, men ought to take care that they be really enjoined by God; for, we must notice, that this saying of Christ’s was intended to apply only to tithing, which was enjoined, and not to superstitious and unauthorized washings, for these he neither observed himself, nor approved in others. Great tenderness of conscience, in reference to things commanded by God, is, as far as it goes, a favourable symptom: in reference, however, to things imposed on men by human authority, or by their own wayward imaginations, it is a cruel bondage, and a dangerous snare. But, if even the most minute matters which rest on a divine command, are to be carefully attended to, how much more evident is it that the comparatively weighty matters, which rest on the same foundation, are imperatively binding? and how plainly did the Pharisees’ neglect of the great duties of justice, mercy, and the love of God, prove that their scrupulosity in the affair of tithes was not the result of a truly good conscience, but either the partial working of a deluding superstition, or the mere acting of a part to serve some sinister purpose! Their great care to avoid the slightest ceremonial offence, while they committed the most heinous crimes without scruple, is illustrated by our Lord, according to Matthew, by the proverbial expression of “straining at” or rather, straining out “a gnat, and swallowing a camel.”

Our Lord goes on to denounce another woe on the Pharisees, because of their pride. “*Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues.*” Such affectation of superiority was very unbecoming in any place, but especially in the synagogues, in the places of worship, in the places where they were assembled to humble themselves before the great God of heaven, who hath made all men of one blood, who will have them all to look on each other as brethren, and who declares that “he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” It was not the actual possession of the most honourable places that Christ condemned, for they must have been possessed by some persons; but it was loving them, greatly desiring them, claiming them, and valuing themselves upon them. The Pharisees loved also “*greetings in the markets.*” They loved, coveted,

pompous salutations in the most public places, where the greatest number of people could witness the honour done to them. They loved to be saluted with the title of Rabbi, which was expressive of very high honour to them as teachers, with almost, if not altogether, absolute authority and infallibility, and which was exceptionable as lately introduced, and as implying undue superiority. "But be not ye called Rabbi," said he elsewhere, "for one is your Master, even Christ." To show all due respect to teachers and other superiors is commendable; but the usurpation of human authority and of lordship over the opinions and conduct of men, ought neither to be attempted nor submitted to.

Once more, our Lord denounces a woe on the Pharisees, joining, however, with them the scribes or lawyers—that is, the expounders of the law, some of whom were of the sect of the Pharisees, and too many of whom closely resembled them in the worst traits of their character; and as he had before virtually charged, so he now expressly charges them with the sin of hypocrisy. "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*" A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not; one who acts a part as under a mask; one who seems, in words and actions, to be quite a different character from what he is at heart. This was peculiarly characteristic of most of the scribes and Pharisees, who were attentive to outward appearances, but neglected the state of their souls, and who did "all their works to be seen of men." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*" On that other occasion, in the 23d chapter of Matthew already referred to, Christ illustrated their hypocrisy, in a somewhat different way. "Woe unto you," said he, "for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." When the sepulchres were above ground, as many of them were, the Jews were accustomed to whitewash them, or otherwise ornament them, and render them conspicuous, in part, perhaps, from the natural desire that the places where their dead lay should be respected, but chiefly from a care that none might contract ceremonial pollution by touching them. In Numb. xix. 16, it is enacted that "whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." A sepulchre thus whitened, yet containing the corrupting dead, was an apt emblem of the ostentatious display and real depravity which Christ was rebuking. But whereas, on that occasion, he drew the comparison from those sepulchres which were very conspicuous, on this he draws it from graves which appeared not, which were not visible, being overgrown with grass, and on a level, or nearly on a level, with the ground. Such graves were a striking emblem of the concealed corruption of the scribes and Pharisees. Passengers, too, might stumble on such graves, and fall,

or at least step on them, or touch them, and so become ceremonially unclean before they were aware of it. Thus, these scribes and Pharisees were not only full of hidden iniquity themselves, but, by their manners and conduct, were the means of corrupting those who had intercourse with them. And so, familiarity with all ungodly persons is dangerous and infectious, and especially familiarity with those whose depravity does not appear on the surface of their character, but is only discovered on more thorough acquaintance. Against open and universal profligacy of manners, most men are sufficiently on their guard to avoid being led astray by it; but where the concealment of corruption prevents them from suspecting harm, the infection often insinuates itself so gradually, that they are essentially injured before they are at all aware of their danger.

From the passage, thus explained, we may learn,

1. *That the written word of God is the true rule of doctrine and duty, to the exclusion of oral tradition.* We have noticed that, though divers washings were appointed by the law, there were no such washings enjoined in it as those here referred to; that the Pharisees rested them on the tradition of the elders; that our Lord's practice showed that no such authority was binding; and that we have his express declaration, that they made the Word of God of none effect by their traditions. And so it is still. Nothing should be acknowledged by us as a rule, but Scripture. All things necessary to salvation, and all things that the Head of the Church intended to be universally and permanently obligatory on the Church, were committed to writing by inspired men, after having been delivered by himself and his apostles by word—that is, in oral teaching. Untaught, however, by the example of the Jews and the condemnatory sentence pronounced on it by Jesus Christ, the Papists have dared to say that the “oral traditions of the (Roman) Catholic Church are to be received with equal piety and reverence as the books of the Old and New Testaments;” “which traditions* if any one knowingly despise, let him be accursed.” The consequence of this has been the same as formerly; they have made the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions, setting aside much that is truly scriptural, and foisting in a great variety of pernicious heresies, and superstitious practices. It is our bounden duty to reject the whole of these traditions, and to adhere exclusively to the Holy Scriptures. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them.”

2. We learn, from this passage, *the unlawfulness of attempting to impose ceremonies of human invention on others, and of complying with such ceremonies ourselves; especially, when they are represented as binding on the conscience, and when they are made essential terms of communion.* Washing the hands before a meal might have been free from objection, had it been merely

* Council of Trent.

adopted like any other common custom of the country: but, when it assumed the form of a religious duty, when it was enjoined as binding on the conscience, and when it was put in the place of inward purity, it lost its harmless character, it became a sinful imposition; and, as we have seen, Christ, our perfect example, would not comply with it. But has there not been a great deal of this kind of superstitious and tyrannical imposition practised in the Church? What useless, cumbersome, and unlawful additions have been made to the beautifully simple ordinances of the gospel! Such additions rendered a thorough reformation and throwing off of the heavy yoke absolutely necessary. Whatever may be imagined to the contrary, there can be neither acceptance with God, nor benefit to man, in any observances not of divine appointment. "In vain do they worship God, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Of everything of the kind this question implies the rejection, "Who hath required this at your hand?" It is an admirable principle, to admit nothing into Christian worship but what has express scriptural authority in reference to the Christian dispensation. What is evidently contrary to Scripture ought to be rejected without a moment's hesitation. And not only so, but even those things which may be considered as matters of indifference in themselves ought to be resisted when any attempt is made to impose them as of divine authority, or as essential to Church fellowship. In such cases, the apostle Paul's example teaches the Christian to say, "All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." When ecclesiastical tyrants begin, by such impositions, to say to the soul, "Bow down, that we may go over," it is time to let them know that they are not thus to lord it over God's heritage: it is time for Christians resolutely to act on the precept, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

3. We here learn that *true religion is a universal principle*. "These things ought ye to have done," said Jesus, "and not to leave the other undone." Religion does not, indeed, exist in a state of perfection as to degree, in any one particular; but it extends to every particular in the character which it influences; so that the true Christian is not wilfully and habitually neglectful of anything he sees to be incumbent. It includes the least, while it is peculiarly concerned about the weightier matters of the law. The believer is not "partial in the law;"* he is not like Herod, who "heard John gladly and did many things," but still continued a slave to presumptuous and reigning sins. His language is, without exception, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let us think well of this: and let us see that we be able to say, from the heart, with David, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."—"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts dili-

* Mal. ii. 9.

gently ; oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments,"

Lastly, we learn, from this passage, throughout, *the sin and folly of resting satisfied with the fair and hypocritical outside of Pharisaism ; and, of course, the necessity of a radical change of state and heart—of inward purity, and if sincere, scriptural, active, consistent piety and morality.* Suppose we were to gain the object of the Pharisee, and succeed in making men believe that we were eminent in sanctity ; and suppose we were to succeed even in imposing on ourselves the belief that we were so—all that could avail us nothing to salvation. "Except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." If we would be the children of God, we must "serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."—"I the Lord search the heart," saith he ; "I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." It is not enough to preserve some outward decency : we must also have inward purity. The divine command is this : "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved : how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"—"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners ; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Now, this cleansing implies pardon, coming through faith in the atonement. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth believers from all sin : believers wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. No real purification can come to us, except in this way. Though we should "wash ourselves with snow-water, and make our hands ever so clean," yet God would plunge us in the ditch, and our own clothes would abhor us, if there were no daysman between us, to lay his hand upon us both. This cleansing also implies regeneration : "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," which God sheds on sinners abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one." But, when the heart itself is cleansed, then those things which proceed from it are clean also. Nothing else but this washing from the guilt and pollution of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ will do ; nothing else will cleanse the soul. Besides, wherever this radical change takes place, there is also, at the same time, a purification, in the sense of actual repentance and amendment. Think you that because Pilate, "took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person," he was really innocent, when he still scourged Jesus, and delivered him to be crucified ? Or think you that the washings of the Pharisees were a proper substitute for their ceasing from their crimes ? No. If we are to be truly clean, we must attend to the injunctions : "Wash you, and make you clean, put away the evil of

your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Let us beware, too, of the particular sins with which the Pharisees are, in this passage, proved to have been guilty. Let us beware of a bigoted zeal for forms, to the neglect of the substance, of piety: for, there are still some who are full of fiery zeal for their own peculiarities, and yet decided enemies to vital religion. Let us beware of "ravening"—of extortion and reigning covetousness in any form: and let us rather cultivate a spirit of superiority to the world, and give alms liberally, as God may enable us. Let us beware of the pride of affecting the chief seats, and pompous titles; and let us rather "in honour prefer one another:" for, "how can we believe, if we receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" Especially, let us beware of this Spirit in reference to the house of God. "It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine, and make a figure there."* Let us beware of secret depravity. We are all, naturally, as concealed graves. Let us look into our own breasts. Let us open up the dark chamber of iniquity that is there: and let us seek that it may be purified. If we are yet totally impure, let us seek the new heart and the new spirit, that there may be a commencement of spirituality within us. But such language as the following becomes us all, with a view, either to the commencement of the divine life in our souls, or to our farther purification: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."—"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord; and renew a right spirit within me."—"Sprinkle clean water upon us, and we shall be clean; from all our filthiness, and from all our idols do thou cleanse us." Enable us to come out from among the wicked, and to be separate, so that we may not touch the unclean thing, and that thou mayst be a Father to us, and take us for thy sons and daughters, O Lord God Almighty. And, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

* Henry on Matt. xxiii. 6.

LECTURE LXII.

LUKE XI. 45-54.

“ Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers, for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. 52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.”

IN denouncing, as in the 44th verse, the third woe on the Pharisees, our Lord included and expressly mentioned the scribes along with them: “ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.” In immediate connexion with this, Luke goes on to say, in the passage before us, “ *Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.*” We are furnished with the key to this interference by the circumstance that the words “ scribes” and “ lawyers” were only different ways of designating the same persons. Thus, the same person who is called a “ lawyer” in Matt. xxii. 35, is called “ one of the scribes,” in Mark xii. 28. And, as they are often joined with the Pharisees, under the designation of the Scribes, so they are sometimes joined with them under the designation of Lawyers;—as in Luke vii. 30. “ But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.” The word lawyers, however, as applied to these people, is to be understood, not in the sense which it now commonly bears with us, but as signifying doctors—that is teachers or expounders of the law. Indeed we find them in the 5th chapter and 17th verse of this Gospel, joined with the Pharisees, under the title of “ doctors of the law.” As these lawyers, or doctors of the law, *expounded* the law according to the traditions, and the Pharisees *observed*, or pretended to observe the law according to the traditions, there was an intimate connexion between them, and they were both charge-

able, generally speaking, with the same theoretical and practical errors, and espoused each other's cause; nay, though it was not necessary that they should be so, many of the lawyers were of the sect of the Pharisees. The lawyers, on this occasion, complained that Christ had reproached, reviled, or abused them; for so they spake of his just reproofs, vainly judging themselves to be above all fault.

But, carrying along with us the practical improvement, we observe that the workings of human nature are much the same in substance in every age, though modified by circumstances. Is there not still a similar combination, and resemblance, and defence of each other's views and conduct, among lax teachers, and worldly men of almost every description? And is there not a consorting together among those classes who substitute hypocritical observances for sincere piety and morality, and self-righteousness, and forms, and outward ordinances, for justification by faith in Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit? Let us mark and avoid every thing of that kind.

Is it not, also, still common to be offended with just and faithful reproofs, and to resist them and resent them, as if they were groundless and malevolent reproaches? As it was with Israel of old, in the time of Jeremiah,* so it is with too many still. "Behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach; they have no delight in it." They hate a plain exposure of their false opinions, and sinful practices, and danger, like Ahab, who said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Our Lord himself said, "The world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." But, if the things said, be in themselves right, it is true wisdom for us to avail ourselves of them, as far as they in any way apply to us. Even though we may be reproached and attacked in a spirit of rancour, it is wise to get all the good we can from the treatment. It is right to be taught, even by an enemy. But, especially, friendly and faithful admonitions, addressed to us with the benevolent intention of doing us good, should be taken in good part, and carefully improved. It is a happy circumstance when men are so far humbled as to submit to reproof. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear."—"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."—"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

A less faithful reprover than Jesus Christ might, when thus turned upon, have retracted, or explained away, what he had said, or might have assured the lawyers that they were too hasty in applying his sharp reproofs to themselves: but instead of that, he directly repeats the woe and the charge, with new illustrations. "*And he said*" (verse 46), "*Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye*

* Jer. vi. 10.

lade men with burdens greivous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." The law of Moses, even in its true and unstretched meaning, though excellent, and necessary for the time and for the reasons for which it was given, was of difficult and expensive observance; so that the apostle Peter said, on occasion of the dissension about Christians keeping the law of Moses: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" But the scribes, not taking it and understanding it correctly as they found it in Scripture, rendered it vastly more difficult by their rigorous decisions on the letter of some of the precepts, and by a great many additions for which they could plead no authority but tradition. It appears, however, that while they were extremely rigorous in imposing these things on others, they were very lax in the observance of them themselves. The scribes and Pharisees, "say and do not," said our Lord elsewhere.* Severe to others, they were indulgent to themselves, dispensing altogether with some things, and compounding for others, so as to allow their rules to interfere very little with their own inclinations.

On this we may remark, for our own instruction, that while those teachers who have presumed to add superstitious and burdensome observances of human contrivance to the scriptural rule of duty, are themselves, generally speaking, negligent in their conduct, and never to be trusted, or obeyed, in these respects, we ought also to be very conscientiously attentive that our own practice correspond with our directions to others, in things which are agreeable to the Word of God. What we prescribe to others, we must do ourselves. The inconsistency, sinfulness, and bad effects of the opposite conduct, are thus well exposed in Rom. ii. from the 17th verse, in a passage which, though addressed to him "who is called a Jew," is applicable, in spirit, to him who is called a Christian. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." This admonition to the lawyers, or doctors of the law, is more peculiarly worthy of the consideration of ministers. How criminal and how sad, if, while we call on the people to believe and obey the gos-

* Matt. xxiii. 3.

pel, we continue unbelieving and disobedient ourselves, and destroy by our practice what we labour to establish by our preaching! But let not the admonition be disregarded by any of you who profess to receive, and are accustomed to advocate, the strict rules of Christian duty; for, what scandal will you bring on the worthy name whereby you are called, and what guilt will you contract yourselves, if, while you are speaking fair, there be seven abominations in your heart, and if, while you are severe on the faults of others, and high in the tone of your demands, you yourselves be found transgressors!

Verses 47 and 48: "*Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.*" The similar passage in Matt. xxiii. 29, runs thus, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them who killed the prophets." We are by no means to suppose that our Lord here condemned, in general, the respect which is sincerely shown to the dead, by the erection and repair of monuments with inscriptions, and the like. Something of this kind has been common in all nations, especially in honour of those who lost their lives in what was considered a good cause. A pleasing instance of such respect to a prophet upwards of three hundred years after he prophesied, is mentioned in 2 Kings xxiïi. 17. "Then he," that is, good king Josiah, "said, What title," or inscription, "is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God who came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done, against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria." At the same time, the first building and the subsequent repairing of monuments are often owing to vanity, or hypocrisy, and, in such cases, are plainly blameworthy. Attention of this kind is often the very opposite of a real regard for the principles and character of the dead. It was surely a pleasing circumstance to which Peter adverted, when he said, upwards of a thousand years after David's death, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day:" but, what Josephus, in his Antiquities,* relates of Herod repairing, in a very expensive and splendid manner, the sepulchre of king David, cannot be considered as an act of sincere regard to his memory, or any indication of true piety. As for the scribes and Pharisees—when we consider that they made void the doctrines of the prophets, and rejected

* Lib. xvi.

the Messiah of whom they testified, it is plain that their conduct in rebuilding and ornamenting their tombs was mere hypocrisy. It is true that, as yet, their iniquity, in this respect, was not fully developed: but they could not conceal the enmity of their hearts against Jesus and his apostles, and they were already meditating and taking counsel to put him to death. Under the mask of veneration for the dead prophets, they were cherishing hatred and cruelty against the living.

Their conduct in this way has been imitated, nay, surpassed, by the followers of the Man of Sin. With the same cruelty towards the living witnesses for the truth, they have been guilty of greater superstition and impiety. We read, no doubt, of the Pharisees showing a hypocritical care to preserve the tombs of ancient saints: but we do not read of them, foolish and wicked and careless of Scripture as they were, dedicating, of their own authority, particular days and places to saints, either of Scripture history, or of their own making;—we do not read of them enshrining the relics of saints, or burning incense to them, or imagining that their devotion would be more acceptable because offered at their tombs, or forming images of them, or kneeling to them, or praying to them. Such follies and abominations as these were unknown among them; but were introduced, in the most rampant form, under the great apostasy in the Christian Church; the leaders and adherents of which apostasy, at the very time they were showing such unscriptural, hypocritical, and idolatrous regard to dead saints, real or imaginary, were “making themselves drunk with the blood of the living saints, wherever they had the power to execute their cruel purpose. And though wherever such power is taken from them, or policy, or other circumstances restrain them from its exercise, they are accustomed to speak against persecution; yet they do palliate its enormity, they canonize those who were guilty of it, they reject the doctrines of the prophets and the true saints of Scripture; and however individuals of them who adhere to the system are of a better spirit, the system itself is uncharitable and exclusive; it actually exercises in some places a very tyrannical sway, and were it not for restraints brought to bear on it from without, it would still urge men on to deeds of cruel oppression and of blood.

But, looking at this idea in its more direct bearing on ourselves—is it not common for some of us to think that if we had lived in the days of the prophets, or of Christ and the apostles, we would have stood aloof from those who opposed and killed them, and would have supported them to the utmost, not considering whether we may not still be under the influence of that natural enmity which would have broken out in that way then, and which shows itself in a too plain, though different way now? There are those, too, who, from the force of altered circumstances, are brought to speak favourably of departed benefactors of the Church, and, perhaps, to subscribe to their

monuments, who yet are altogether of a different spirit from them. There are also some who can praise faithful ministers when they are gone, who did not improve their ministry while they lived, and who still hold out against the truth. There are even some who, while they honour, in words, the memory of the faithful teachers of former times, dislike and vilify the faithful teachers of their own times. The departed are out of sight, and silent, and at a distance; the living are seen, and heard, and close upon them. The dead disturb not their slumbers; but the living, by their doctrines and life, break their false peace. Like the two witnesses prophesied of in the Revelation, faithful teachers, and, indeed, all faithful Christians, "torment them that dwell on the earth;" that is, by their doctrine, example, and reproofs, they disquiet their minds, so that they cannot proceed without disturbance in their course of worldliness and ungodliness. It concerns us all to think well of this. It is common, too, for people who are neglecting the opportunities of salvation, with which they themselves are favoured, to imagine that if they had had the opportunities of other times, it would have been different with them, forgetting that the fault of their present hardness is all their own, and that there is every reason to believe that the same perversity would have characterized them in any circumstances. And what shall we say of those who, having had pious parents, are heard to speak honourably of their memory, but who are, as to religion, altogether of a different character? Do they imagine that such talk will pass for piety with Him whose word teaches that every man must stand or fall by himself? Let them know that good parental example not followed, must reflect disgrace on them, and aggravate their guilt and condemnation.

The same subject is prosecuted as follows: "*Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.*" Though there are some passages in the Old Testament* somewhat similar to this, which speak of the past conduct of the Jews to God's prophets, this appears to be, not a quotation, but the original words of Christ himself. It is the most common opinion, that the words, "Therefore also said the wisdom of God," are the words of Luke designating the Redeemer himself as the wisdom of God; as Paul, writing to the Corinthians, calls him "the power of God and the wisdom of God." This idea is strengthened by the consideration, that in the passage of Matt. xxiii. 34, which is very similar, though referring to a different occasion, our Lord is represented in the usual plain way, as speaking in his own person, thus: "Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets

* 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15; Neh. ix. 26.

and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify: and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

At all events, as some hesitate to adopt this idea in its full extent, we are to consider Christ as authoritatively declaring what divine wisdom had determined as to the mission of these inspired men, and as predicting what would be the result. In this respect, these Jews too closely imitated the conduct of their persecuting forefathers: for, the subsequent history of the Church shows how, by themselves, or by handing them over to the Roman power, they persecuted and put to death most of the apostles, and other prophets, or inspired teachers of the gospel.

The word "that," with which the 50th verse is introduced, is to be understood as pointing out merely the event, and not the design, and is equivalent to "so that." The Lord is "long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." With regard both to individuals and nations, he generally waits long before he strikes." Perseverance, however, in disobedience, is sure to bring down his vengeance at last. The reference here is chiefly to the Jews as a nation. By joining, as most of them did, in opposition to Christ and his apostles, they showed themselves to be of the same spirit with their persecuting fathers, and identified themselves, as it were, with their crimes; and, by their obstinate wickedness, which surpassed whatever had been shown before, they were accumulating on themselves the aggravated guilt and punishment of the blood of all the prophets and righteous men that had ever been shed. God was to "require" it of them; that is, he was to visit them and inflict punishment on them for it. The circumstances of the murder of righteous Abel by his brother Cain, out of envy, and because Cain's "own works were evil, and his brother's good," are well known. Having mentioned the first Old Testament martyr, Jesus mentions one of a much lower age. There is a difference of opinion, however, as to who is here intended. Most of the commentators believe that the Zacharias here mentioned was the same of whom we thus read in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20: "And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoida the priest, who stood above the people [in an elevated situation, that they might see and hear him], and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord;" the enormity of the crime being increased by the sacredness of the place in which it was committed. "Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his

father had done to him, but slew his son: and when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it," or, as it might be rendered, in the future, and prophetically, "The Lord will look upon it, and require it." In answer to the objection, that whereas our Lord, in Matthew, calls this Zacharias the son of Barachias, the person mentioned in 2 Chronicles is called the son of Jehoiada, it is observed that the Jews frequently had two names, as Abiel and Ner, Matthew and Levi, Lebbeus and Thaddeus. Others,* though with less probability, consider the person here mentioned to have been the less prophet Zechariah, who is called in the first verse of his prophecy, "the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo;" and they remark that, though the temple was in ruins in the beginning of his life, he lived till after it was rebuilt, and might have suffered martyrdom in it; and also that there is mention, in the Jewish Targum, of a tradition of Zechariah, the son of Iddo, being slain in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord, because he would have withdrawn the people from their evil ways.†

On many occasions, the wrath of God had already visited the Jewish people, because of this and other crimes; but now the time was approaching when it was to come on them far more fiercely than ever, and so as utterly to destroy them as a nation. They were continuing to increase their national guilt, till it was approaching the highest pitch which a God of long-suffering could endure. This was what our Lord, according to Matthew, called "filling up the measure of their fathers;"—a way of speaking illustrated by such passages as these, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full;" and, "The Jews both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, to fill up their sins alway: for, the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." In this case, the Lord was to visit, in a most awful manner, "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated him." This was fulfilled in the dreadful temporal destruction which came on their temple, city, and nation, from the Romans; and in the still more dreadful misery which, in the unseen world, overtook those of them who died in impenitence and in the rejection of the only Saviour.

But let us apply this to ourselves. When we think of the prophets and apostles whose writings and lives we read, and who may therefore be said to have been sent to us, let us see, that while we profess to acknowledge them as inspired, and thus honour them in so far, we do not pour contempt on their memory, and show that we would have been likely to join with their enemies, by refusing to listen to what they have revealed

* Among whom is Scott.

† The opinions which refer this to the father of John the Baptist, and to a later person still, are altogether untenable.

and enjoined, and to follow their example. Instead of that, let us give heed to their sure word of prophecy, and take them "who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

Again; let the sinner who is continuing in a life of unbelief and rebellion, think well what he is doing when he is thus filling up the measure of his iniquity, and what will be the consequence, if he go on till it be full. O foolish and infatuated transgressor! thus to abuse the divine patience, and to dare omnipotence. "Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works." The cloud of wrath is gathering thick around thee, and will soon burst in a storm on thy head. Be entreated to stop. Seek forgiveness for past sin by faith in the blood of Christ, who will then prove to thee as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: and, instead of adding to thy sins, begin, by a patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.

This part of the passage is also very admonitory with regard to national guilt and national judgments. The awful judgments of the Jewish nation, when the measure of their iniquity was filled up, were a specimen of what every nation may expect that follows a similar career. Individuals may escape in this life, and yet be overtaken by vengeance hereafter; but nations have no existence, as nations, in the other world; and therefore, if they are to be punished at all, it must be in this world. While nations, too, are accountable for all national sins, the guilt of innocent blood, and especially of blood shed in persecution, is what God is peculiarly careful to require of them. How plainly has the seat of the beast, especially the part of it composed of the French nation, been suffering for many years on account of the torrents of blood shed in the persecution of those who were slain for the word of God, and the testimony which they held! The time also will come, when the universal and final retribution will thus be celebrated by a "great voice of much people in heaven,"—"Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." If we may hope that the blood thus shed in former times in our own land has been repented of, and if there be certain pleasing signs on which we can fix our eye, is there not, however, reason to apprehend the just judgments of God on our nation, because of the many

iniquities which prevail in it? Let us sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of us. May the Lord pour down a spirit of prayer, and of reformation on all ranks, that we may be enabled to comply with his call, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Our Lord brings forward this one more charge, and denounces a corresponding woe, against the scribes, "*Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.*" A key used to be given to stewards of the household and some other office-bearers on their appointment; so that a key became the emblem of authority.* It is said, too, that a key was delivered into the hands of a rabbi, or Jewish doctor of the law, as a token of his authority to open up, or expound the law. It is recorded that when Rabbi Samuel, the Little, died, his key and his tablet were hung on his tomb.† If, then, a key was delivered to a doctor of the law, as a badge of his office, the allusion, as made to this by our Lord, would be very beautiful; it would be as if he had said, "You had a key given to you, but instead of keeping it for constant use, you have carried it away and secreted it." The meaning of the figurative language is, that these scribes, who should have done everything they could to cause the people to understand, believe, and obey the Old Testament Scriptures, kept them in the dark, and even led them into gross errors, by their traditions and false interpretations. In particular, they inculcated ceremonies, but dealt very unfaithfully with the prophecies, and with whatever was intended to prepare for the reception of Messiah. These they either concealed or perverted. In their carnal views of these things, the key, the leading principle to the discovery of Jesus' Messiahship, was lost. "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men," said our Lord, according to Matthew:—they employed the key, so to speak, to lock the door of salvation against the people. They did not enter in themselves, for they rejected the gospel of Christ. In John vii. 48, we meet with the question: "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?" Certainly but few did. They not only would not go in themselves, but they went so far as to do their utmost to prevent those from entering in—that is, from embracing and professing the gospel—who seemed inclined to do so. They did what they could to prevent this, by their own example, by contumelious language, by excommunication, by forbidding to teach in the name of Jesus, and by every species of unjustifiable and wicked interference.

And has there not been exhibited, in the great apostasy, to which we have found it necessary already to advert, a copy of this original portrait, not improved in any respect, but still more unseemly in all its features? Have they not, instead of labouring

* Isa. xxii. 22; Rev. iii. 7.

† Dr. A. Clarke on Matt. xxiii. 13. See also Grotius and Doddridge.

to instruct the people in all revealed truth, been careful to keep them in ignorance of it? Have they not darkened and perverted it, by their traditions and false glosses? Pretending that the key was their own exclusive property, have they not kept it lying rusting and useless? Nay, they have done what the scribes and Pharisees never dared to do—they have kept back the Word of God altogether from many, declaring that it was not safe for them to read it. And where they cannot altogether prevent the people from having it, they prevent them as much as possible, and clog it with many incumbrances, and will not let it speak without their commentary, and tell men that they must yield up their judgment and their consciences to them. May the Lord speedily deliver every part of the Church from such impositions!

But it is an awful thing, if professed teachers, of any denomination, take away the key of knowledge, and darken or pervert the truth. May they be all “scribes” thoroughly “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,” and instrumental in introducing many others into that kingdom!

We should also notice here the great guilt they incur who exert themselves to injure others in their spiritual state. It is surely bad enough that they will not enter in themselves. Why should they seek to hinder others? The Lord enable us all to beware of such atrocious conduct! May we be all introduced into a state of grace ourselves, and anxious to carry as many along with us as possible!

The chapter concludes thus: “*And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.*” Being greatly provoked by his sharp and just reproofs, they set on him, while yet in the Pharisee’s house, with many captious and ensnaring questions, hoping to obtain a handle against him. This was their frequent attempt, of which we have a remarkable instance in Matt. xxii. 15: “Then went the Pharisees and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk; and they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians,” for that malicious purpose; but he answered them so wisely, that they marvelled and went away. In these attempts were fulfilled in him, as the antitype, the words of the Psalmist:* “Every day they wrest my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.”

Having endeavoured to carry the practical improvement along with us, it only remains to apply to ourselves these two last verses in the way of caution and of instruction.

In the way of caution—let us beware of imitating the scribes and Pharisees in endeavouring to ensnare those with whom we may come into collision on the subject of religion, or those who

are teachers of it. Isaiah speaks with much disapprobation of those that "make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate." Let us not condemn a man for a word misplaced, or misunderstood, which he is willing to retract. And, if we find it necessary to dispute with a person, let us not be captious, but let us reason fairly.

In the way of instruction—we are here taught that when we are called on to speak faithfully in defence of the truth, we must expect opposition, and that not of the most honourable kind. We must expect that ungenerous adversaries will try to provoke us to say, or do, something, from which they may take an unfair advantage of us; and it may happen that they seek to establish their own credit by ruining ours. It is very difficult to conduct such controversies with propriety: but if called to them (and many of us will be so in our common intercourse and conversation), such rules as these will be useful: Let us study to be well acquainted with the subject on which we are speaking, and to go no farther than we clearly see our way, and the Word of God warrants. Let us be discreet and cautious in our language. Let us preserve good temper and patience, lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips, and thus injure the cause which we sincerely mean to promote. Let us endeavour in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves. Let us follow the beautiful example of the Lord Jesus Christ, considering him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. And let us earnestly implore the assistance of God, in prayer, beseeching him to set a watch before our mouth, to keep the door of our lips, and to give us a mouth and wisdom which "all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist."

LECTURE LXIII.

LUKE XII. 1-9.

“ In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops. 4. And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; 9. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.”

IN the latter part of the preceding chapter, we had an account of our Lord's dining in the house of a certain Pharisee, and of the rebukes he there faithfully administered to the Pharisees and scribes. “ *In the mean time,*” continues Luke, in the beginning of this 12th chapter, that is, while Christ was in the house, and engaged in this manner, “ *there were gathered together an innumerable multitude,*” literally myriads “ *of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another,*” in their desire to get near enough to see and to hear him. We read, in the 29th verse of the foregoing chapter, that “the people were gathered thick together;” and that was in the early part of the day, as appears from the tenor of the history. Now, however, the crowd had greatly increased in the neighbourhood of the house in which Jesus was. It is a pleasant thing to see people flocking in crowds to hear the words of Christ in the public ordinances. To this there is a reference in the prophetic passages, “Unto him shall the gathering of the people be:” and, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” But we know that only a small proportion of the crowds who came to hear Christ, received any saving benefit; and there is reason to fear that this is still too much the case. It is so far well that a multitude assembles to hear the gospel; but let us not thence conclude that the great object of the Christian ministry is gained; let us consider “faith unto salvation” as the ultimate object; and let every one who has joined the multitude think thus with himself: “I am present with the rest, but am I a true worshipper? I have come to hear, but am I receiving with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save my soul?”

Though it is not expressly stated, we must, from the circumstances of the case, suppose that our Lord now left the house of the Pharisee, and went into the open air, that he might be heard by the crowd who were anxiously waiting for him. He began, however, with addressing himself more immediately to his own disciples, which may mean either the twelve only, or all those who were in the habit of waiting on his teaching to learn the way of life: but though he addressed what he said to them, it was also in the hearing, and for the benefit, of the multitude. On this we may remark, that it is proper to address sometimes one part of our audience, and sometimes another, and to distinguish the different classes; and yet that what is said to any one part, if rightly applied, will be instructive to all. What is said to believers may prove useful to unbelievers; and on the contrary, what is said to unbelievers may prove useful to believers. "*He began to say unto his disciples first of all,*" as it is pointed in our copies, which signifies both that he began with his disciples, and that this was the first thing he said to them. Or if, as some think, the comma should come immediately after the word disciples, then the next clause will read: "First of all beware," that is, chiefly, and above all things, beware:—"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." That our Lord employed the word "leaven" to signify doctrine, is plain from Matt. xvi. 6, where he said to his disciples, to the same purpose as here: "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees," and made them understand "how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees." The comparison is an apt one; for, as a piece of leaven, or soured dough, when mixed with a greater quantity of dough, sours, and ferments, and makes like itself the whole, so doctrines, or principles, whether good or bad, influence, according to their own nature, the affections and conduct of those who embrace them. "The kingdom of heaven," said Christ, "is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," said Paul twice. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, *which is hypocrisy.*" Having, in the foregoing chapter, given various illustrations of Pharisaical hypocrisy, Jesus now, in express terms, guards his disciples against it. He guards them against pretending to be what they were not—against assuming the character, and resting satisfied with the outward appearance and form of religion, when they were destitute of its reality and power. He then proceeds to show them the complete folly of hypocrisy, from the consideration that, sooner or later, it would be detected and exposed. "*For there is nothing covered,*" nothing so carefully concealed, "*that shall not be revealed,*" and laid open; "*neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore,*" or, so that, "*whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear,*" or whispered, "*in closets,*" in the most

retired places, "*shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.*" The roofs of houses, in the East, were flat, and it was customary to go out on them, for various purposes; and, in particular, as appears from this passage, to make proclamations in the hearing of those who were on the streets. As there are no bells in Turkey, criers proclaim, at the present day, the hours of Moham-medan worship from the house-tops, or minarets of the mosques.

Now, my friends, what Jesus said to his disciples you ought to consider him as also saying to you, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." And, that you may be able to know and avoid this sin, notice these marks of the hypocrite. He is one who pretends to be possessed of the inward graces of faith and regeneration, when he is not. He is one who, though he engage in exercises of devotion, is not interested in them. He is one who wishes rather to appear than to be pious. He is one who partially chooses some duties (and these are generally the more noticeable) to the neglect of other duties which are generally the more secret and more weighty. He is known by his pride, as is shown in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican; and, having no root in himself, he falls away in the time of trial. "What is the hope of the hypocrite," asks Job, "though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

Let Job's question lead you to think seriously and with godly jealousy over yourselves, of the possibility and danger of your indulging a hypocritical spirit and a false hope. It may appear somewhat strange that a hypocrite should have any hope, but be it remembered that he sometimes succeeds in imposing on himself, as well as on others. He may have hope from his ignorance of himself—from his disregard of the spirituality and extent of the divine law—from the flatteries of others, and from the length he may go in knowledge, in belief of certain things, in spurious repentance, in passing and unfruitful joy, in abstaining from gross sins, in the preservation of external decency, in the outward observance of ordinances, and, in short, in whatever has the appearance, but not the reality of religion. The hypocrite, it is also implied, may gain somewhat; if he act his part well, he may gain some worldly end—he may gain a false peace, and he may gain the esteem of his fellow-creatures during his life, and their applause when he is dead. But what are his hope and his gain worth, when God taketh away his soul?—when God says unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" What can he be profited, however much he gain, if he lose his own soul? How can his hope endure, when it has no support, or nourishment? Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it

shall not endure." Nay, hypocrisy entails not only disappointment, but ruin. The portion appointed for the hypocrites is to be "cut asunder," and condemned to the place where there are "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If, then, there be any of you who are living in a state of conscious hypocrisy, surely nothing can be more plain to yourselves than that you ought immediately to seek another spirit. And as there may be of you who are not quite aware of it, but who are habitually hypocritical notwithstanding; it will be well for you to try how far your true, undisguised, inward feelings correspond with your outward profession and actions, for this, in praying for the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the likely way to bring you to conviction. Remember, that while man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart; and that, though you may impose on others, and even on yourselves, you cannot impose on him.

Let it be remembered, too, that as believers, though they have every grace in some degree, have no grace in perfection, so, in particular, the grace of sincerity is not perfect in them; in other words, let it be remembered, that there is some hypocrisy even in the people of God. Let those who truly fear the Lord be aware of this, that they may conscientiously guard against it. Let not their prayer proceed out of feigned lips. Let them see to it that their hearts go along with their words and actions. With this view, let them endeavour to realize an abiding sense of God's presence and omniscience, and let the prayer of each of them be, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me."—"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart"—"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers."

Verses 4-7: *And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.*"

Having, in the preceding verses, warned his disciples against hypocrisy, Jesus, in these, warns them against the sinful fear of man. It was not unusual for him to repeat some truths on different occasions, in similar, though not always the very same words; and we find the greater part of what is recorded here also recorded, in reference probably to an earlier period, in the 10th chapter of Matthew. He here addressed his disciples by the endearing appellation of "friends," to signify the love he bore to them, and the intimacy to which he admitted them. "Henceforth," said he,* "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends;

* John xv. 15.

for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." This caution against the fear of man, or exhortation to holy courage, was peculiarly suitable to the disciples who were soon to be exposed to very severe trials for Jesus' sake. "They shall put you out of the synagogues," said he elsewhere; "yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body;" let not the apprehension of persecution, though it should be unto death, so terrify you as to cause you to apostatize from me, or to sink into despondency. Men can kill the body, "but after that have no more that they can do." According to Matt. x. 28, Jesus said, "They are not able to kill the soul." Men's rage can affect the martyrs no farther than their martyrdom. Their body, when deprived of life, is insensible to further abusive treatment, and their soul is safe for ever. They cannot *kill* the soul—this expression plainly teaches that the soul is immaterial, or altogether different from the body; that it survives the death of the body, and that it enters immediately on a new state of conscious existence. This is the first consideration which our Lord addressed to his disciples, as a reason against the fear of man: and surely it was well adapted to that purpose, for why should their apprehension, even of the killing of the body, which must at all events die a natural death ere long, move from their steadfastness those whose souls cannot be injured, and whose hopes are sure for eternity?

"But," adds our Lord, "I will forewarn," or point out to, "you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Or, according to Matthew, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Viewing this verse in a general way, we learn from it that it is the duty of believers to fear God, not indeed with a slavish fear, or terror, but with that holy and filial fear, with that reverence, which makes them afraid to offend, and anxious in every respect to please him. We are here reminded, also, of the solemn truth that the anger and the favour of God extend far beyond death, introducing the departed soul immediately, and the risen body at the last day, into endless misery, or endless happiness. Viewing, again, the verse in the connexion in which it here stands with the exhortation against the fear of man, it not only presents the proper object of fear in contrast with the improper, but suggests a strong reason in favour of the one, and against the other; for, however terrible the wrath of man may be, the wrath of God must be much more terrible to those who have any correct idea of what it implies; and therefore, every enlightened man must see the wisdom of submitting to any sacrifice, however great, rather than that he should apostatize from the truth, and thereby incur the endless displeasure of the Almighty.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your

head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." The Roman coins were now in common use in Judea, and indeed through the greater part of the world. The Roman farthing,* being one-tenth of the value of the penny,† and the penny being equal to sevenpence half-penny of our money, their farthing, of course, was equal to three farthings of our money. On the former occasion, as related by Matthew,‡ our Lord said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?"—and here he says, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?"—a proportion which is often observed in selling articles, according to the rule of some advantage being allowed when a greater number are taken. These birds seem to have been used for food. Of small value as they are, "not one of them is forgotten before God." They are not forgotten, for they are cared for, and provided for, during their life: "Our heavenly Father feedeth them." Nor are they forgotten in their death, seeing not one of them dies, or is killed but by his appointment: as it is in Matthew, "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." It is not altogether uninteresting to remark that even the ancient heathen had some idea of a kind of providence, or superhuman purpose and power, which they called fate, being concerned in the life and death of animals; thus, Homer,§ in one of his similes, speaks of a stag escaping from the hunters, because it was not in the fates that they should catch him. A Jewish writer gives this account of three men, who, at an early period, in order to shelter themselves from a dreadful persecution, shut themselves up in a cave, and lived on dry husks. After thirteen years they came out, and sitting at the mouth of the cave, they observed a fowler stretching his nets to catch birds; and as often as the Bath Kol (that is, the daughter of the voice, or the voice from heaven) said, "Escape!" the bird escaped: but when it said, "A dart!" the bird was taken. Then the rabbi said, "Even a bird is not taken without Heaven, how much less the life of man?"|| "A sparrow shall not fall on the ground without your Father," says our Lord; that is, without his knowledge, and will, or counsel.

This is one of the most express texts in favour of the doctrine of a *particular providence*. The providence of God extends to the smallest as well as to the greatest objects and concerns. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Circumstances the most minute, and to us the most fortuitous, are all ordered by him. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." It is not, then, that these smaller matters are comparatively overlooked in God's attention to the concerns of men; but when such is his care over less important creatures, surely, the certainty of his care over rational and immortal beings, and especially, his own people, must come home to the mind with

* "As" or "assaricus."

† "Denarius."

‡ Matt. x. 29.

§ Οὐδ' ἄρα τι σφί περ κίχνηται αἰσίων ἔτι.—Il. xv. 274.

|| Dr Clarke on Matt. x. 29. See Ps. civ. 27-30.

very strong and delightful conviction. They are "of more value than many sparrows;" nay, one human soul is of more value than the whole irrational creation. Our Lord gives this further beautiful illustration of the doctrine in reference especially to his people, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered:" that is, even the most inconsiderable and least regarded circumstances are all noted and cared for by the Lord. "There shall not a hair of their head fall to the ground," or perish, is a proverbial expression, often found in Scripture, and signifying that not even the slightest injury should befall the persons spoken of. Many hairs might drop from a man's head, and he never miss them; yet they are all numbered by God, and not one of them falls without him. It is difficult to conceive a stronger declaration of the particularity and kindness of his care over his people. The great God who "tellet the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names," numbereth also the hairs of his people's heads. But then, if the very hairs of their heads are numbered, much more the heads themselves, much more their lives, their souls, their most important concerns. He "numbers their steps"—observes all their movements. He is well aware of all their sorrows. He knows when their "sighs are many, and their heart is faint." "Thou tellest my wanderings," says David: "put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?"

Now, this doctrine of a particular providence is not to be dealt with as a curious speculation; but it is to be lived on, as a doctrine of a most practical and consolatory tendency. Remembering that our success, and very life do actually depend on God, we ought to cultivate a spirit of constant dependence on him, looking to him in all things, and forming all our plans in reference to his disposal, saying, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." But the particular way in which our Lord, in this connexion, wished his disciples to improve the doctrine, was as a remedy against the fear of man, and an incitement to holy boldness. Not one sparrow is forgotten before God; but ye are of more value than many sparrows, and even the very hairs of your head are all numbered: "fear not, therefore." The consideration that God by his kind and particular providence would watch over them, and defend them from all evil, as long as he had any work for them to do, was well calculated to support the apostles, and to inspire them with courage to face all the dangers to which the faithful exercise of their ministry might expose them: and the same consideration, applied to themselves, is equally calculated to inspire all Christ's true disciples, in every age, with a holy boldness in discharging duty and supporting the Christian character, in whatever circumstances they may be placed. But we shall return to the application of this point, after noticing the 8th and 9th verses, which are intimately connected with it, and indeed, only represent it under a somewhat different aspect.

“Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God : but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.” The confessing of Christ, on the part of the apostles, implied the public preaching of Jesus as the Messiah, and the preaching of his doctrines in purity ; for, Peter speaks of false teachers who should “privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” And on the part, not only of the apostles, but of all his followers, it implied an acknowledgment of Christ as their Lord and Master, and openly speaking and acting so as to show that they adhered faithfully to him in whatever circumstances they were placed. We have said that it was very necessary to advert to this duty, as they were soon to be severely tried. The Jews passed a resolution that if any man should confess that Jesus was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue ; and we read that many of the Jews who believed on him as the Messiah, “would not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue ; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” We have already observed, too, that the opposers of the gospel proceeded to still greater extremities against those who embraced it. The martyrs were called confessors, by way of eminence. As an encouragement to his followers to a faithful confession of him, whatever it might cost them, Jesus declared that he would confess them ; that is, openly acknowledge them as his own, “before the angels of God,” or, as in Matthew, “before his Father who is in heaven,” referring to the day of judgment, when, in the presence of his Father and of the angels, and of an assembled universe, he should openly acquit them and own them, and address to them the applauding words, “Well done, good and faithful servants ; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.”—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” On the other hand, he declared that whoever should deny him before men—that is, should either expressly deny and abjure, or oppose him, in words, or virtually deny him by apostasy, or wilful sin, (for we read of some who know God, but in works deny him)—should be denied by him before the angels of God—should be disowned, condemned, and disgraced, at the judgment day. He elsewhere informs us that he will then say to such persons, “I tell you I know you not whence ye are : depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” It is not, indeed, every denial of Christ that will necessarily bring with it a denial by him at last ; for we read of Peter denying him in a most impious manner, and yet obtaining forgiveness ; but it is the denial which is persevered in, not repented of, and not pardoned. Neither, on the other hand, is it every confession of Christ that will necessarily bring with it a confession by him at the last ; for not every one that saith unto him, “Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ;” it is not the unmeaning, or hypo-

critical, or temporary confession, but it is the sincere and habitual, verbal and practical confession, which is the result of true faith; it is the confession of which the apostle thus speaks: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." What an encouragement to such a confession the assurance of being confessed! and what an argument against such a denial, the assurance of being denied, by the Judge of all before an assembled universe!

But let me conclude this lecture with addressing to you at once, an earnest dissuasive from sinful fear, and an earnest exhortation to Christian courage. Courage is a virtue which is either active or passive, and which stands opposed both to fear and to shame; and the courageous Christian is one who is neither afraid nor ashamed, to be, to say, to do, or to suffer, whatever faithfulness to his Lord and Master requires.

Consider here, in the first place, some of the many *occasions* which call for the exercise of this grace, and then some *directions* which will be useful to preserve your courage, and thus keep you from sinful fear.

It requires courage, then, to be able to *withstand persecution* for conscience' sake. By the kindness of providence, we are preserved from the violent kinds of persecution; but should these assail us, (and who can say that such revolutions as might bring them upon us are impossible?) a great trial of our principles and courage would be made, and we should be no Christians if we did not withstand them, though they were even unto death. But, though we are free from such, we cannot escape other kinds of persecution, if we are faithful; for we are assured that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

You will need courage, then, to bear *reproach* for Christ's sake. It is quite impossible that you should altogether escape this, if you act a faithful part. You must endeavour, then, to bear it unmoved, at least unmoved from your steadfastness, though you may feel it deeply. "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."—"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." Let none of you suffer as an "evil doer:"—"yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

You will need courage *to act up to your convictions of duty in your own family, and in the world at large.* How much good that might be done in families, is neglected for want of proper courage in their heads! Offences are tolerated, which ought to be checked; and duties are omitted which ought to be performed. To mention only one of these duties—in how many cases is the duty of family prayer neglected because of a sinful fear and false shame in those who ought to take the lead! Be exhorted, you to whom this idea applies, to rise above this hindrance: fear God more, and man less; and the difficulty will vanish. In society, too, you will need much courage to conduct yourselves aright. You are not, indeed, to be ostentatious; but it would ill become Christ's people to be either afraid, or ashamed, to be thought pious. You ought to witness, in your conversation and your conduct, a good confession before all the witnesses, however many they may be; and you should so demean yourselves, that men may "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus." Be on your guard, when unavoidably in company with the worldly and profane, that you comply not with their sinful customs, and that you, in no way, deny your Master. Let me recommend this to the serious attention of the young more especially. Hitherto, it may be, that while you were with your own connexions they have encouraged you to all that was good; but now you will have to mix with those who may seek to jeer you out of your piety and exemplariness of conduct. Lay your account with trials of this kind, act consistently and resolutely, and continue to confess Christ before men.

You will need courage *to resist temptation.* Satan will tempt you; the world will tempt you; and, if you have not care, your own hearts will entice and betray you. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—"When sinners entice you, consent not."—"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men: be strong."

Courage is necessary to confess Christ *in the presence of the rich and powerful*, and of all who are exalted above you in station and influence. "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings," said David, "and will not be ashamed." And what noble courage was displayed by Daniel, and by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!

It may be that some of you will need courage *to venture your life at the call of duty.* You may need it for the right discharge of your business. You may need it to act vigorously in endeavouring to save the lives of others. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" You may need courage in order to defend your country and your friends: and we know that when

duty calls Christians ought to be ready to "lay down their lives for the brethren."

You will need courage *to resist the mere apprehension of evil*. There are many who are under no present pressure of calamity, who yet torment themselves with the fear of imaginary evils to come. But to all his people Jesus says, with regard to such apprehension, "Fear not." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The evils you dread may never arrive; but if they should, they will bring their comforts along with them, and your strength will be as your day.

You will certainly need courage *to bear the evils of life while they are actually pressing on you*. Disappointments, losses, sickness, pain, bereavements by the death of friends—all these require true Christian courage, to bear and improve them aright.

And you will need courage *to meet the last enemy in your own death*. That will be one of your greatest trials, as it will be your last: and to bear it with composure will be the finest display of fortitude. To boast beforehand is very easy; but not so to finish your course with joy, and to remain courageous to the last.

Indeed, the grace of courage is essential to the character and safety of the Christian. Not that every degree of fear is fatal. But that degree and kind of fear which leads to renounce Christ is absolutely so. Those who fall by this are "the fearful," spoken of in that passage of the Revelation—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable—shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

In order, then, to the attainment of this necessary grace of courage, or, which is the same thing, in order to your preservation from sinful fear, let the following brief *directions* be considered and followed.

Begin with a well-founded *hope in God's mercy*, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this, though you may be free from fear, you must be exposed to the most awful danger; and, therefore, though you may be fool-hardy, you cannot be rationally and scripturally courageous. But, if God be "on your side," as the Psalmist expresses it, then you need "not fear what man can do unto you."

Endeavour, next, after a very firm *trust in God's providence*. Remember that the slightest evil cannot befall you without your heavenly Father, and believe that he causes all things to work together for your good.

Reflect on the noble *examples* of courage which are recorded in Scripture. Think what the Old Testament worthies were able to do and suffer through faith. Think how Peter and John "rejoiced to suffer shame for Jesus' name." Think how Paul said, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I *am* ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for *the*

name of the Lord Jesus.”—“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy.” Think of these patterns, and the same truth that supported them will support you.

Vex not yourselves with fears as to the future, but give yourselves to the duties of the present. “Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

Consider *the exhortations and promises* of the Word of God, and have the substance of all; and the very words of many of them, in your memory. They abound to this effect throughout Scripture, especially in Isaiah, and the Psalms. Let one passage suffice here: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Think of the confession that awaits you from the Lord, and the crown of glory which will be yours, at last, if you be faithful. He assures you that he will confess you before his Father and the holy angels: and he says to each of you, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Think often of this; and the thought will far more than counterbalance any reproach, or opposition, you may meet with here.

And, finally, mindful of your own weakness, and how certainly both your strength and courage would fail if you were left to yourselves, *be much in prayer* to God for this grace of holy courage. “In the day that I cried unto thee, thou answeredst me,” said the Psalmist, “and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul.” Pray much to God, then, that he would enable you to be valiant for the truth, and faithful to the end. “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

LECTURE LXIV.

LUKE XII. 10-12.

“And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven
 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say : 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”

CONTINUING to address himself directly to his disciples, in the hearing of the vast multitude, our Lord, in the first verse of the passage now read, utters a solemn warning respecting what is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. And here let us consider the nature of this sin—the inevitable destruction which it entailed—and the application of the subject to ourselves.

First, as to *the nature of this sin*, or what it consists in :—the reference to it here is so brief, that it might be very difficult to gather its meaning from this passage alone ; but, when we consult the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark, the general import, at least, becomes clear. The passage in Matthew is in the 12th chapter, 31st and 32d verses. Before reading these verses, let it be noticed, that our Lord having just cured a man who was possessed with a devil both blind and dumb, the Pharisees, when they heard it, said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils ;” on which, our Lord proceeded to show the folly of such an idea, and then, in that connexion, added, “Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” And when we look at Mark iii. 28, we find our Lord, after a similar exposure of the malicious insinuation, expressing himself thus : “Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme : but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation :” and then, the evangelist adds, as explanatory of the sin of which Christ spoke, “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” Taking the three accounts together, and especially, considering the concluding words of Mark, “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit,” I think it is abundantly plain that the sin against the Holy Ghost consisted in those who actually saw and were convinced of the fact of miracles, imputing the miracles which were

wrought by the Holy Ghost, to Satan. Some commentators consider that our Lord referred only to imputing to diabolical agency the miracles wrought by the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit on and after the day of Pentecost : and therefore, that it could not be committed at the time Christ spoke. But others, allowing that there was then a most extraordinary manifestation of power, can see no good reason, in the nature of things, for making such an absolute distinction, and think, as to the accounts of the evangelists, that they all, especially that of Mark, naturally lead us to consider Jesus as speaking in reference to what had just taken place, as well as in reference to what was to happen afterwards.

Jesus declared that this sin entailed inevitable destruction on those who were guilty of it : while every other sin, and in particular, speaking a word against himself, or blaspheming the Son of man, should be forgiven. Many of the Jews were guilty of opposing and blaspheming Christ. They called him a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and a deceiver of the people ; but there is no doubt that not a few of those who resisted and spoke against him at first, were converted and saved. "All manner of sin and blasphemy," said he, with one exception, "shall be forgiven unto men : " not that any sin can be forgiven unless men turn and apply for forgiveness in the appointed way ; but the most heinous sins are pardonable which do at all admit of repentance and application to the divine mercy, and will be pardoned to those who repent and believe the gospel. As for the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, however, it could never be forgiven. And why ? Just because in its own nature it excluded the possibility of the reception of the only method of salvation. It evidently amounted to a rejection of Christ at the time ; and, as it imputed the miracles, even under a conviction of their reality, to a diabolical agency, it betrayed so confirmed a perversion of reason and feeling, as showed that all means to convert those who were guilty of it would prove in vain, and that God had left them to the obstinacy and hardness which they had chosen.

As to the application of this subject to ourselves. In the first place, *What encouragement is there here for the chief of sinners who will only apply for mercy in the appointed way !* Let us not, in the shadow of what is, doubtless, very dark and terrible in this topic, overlook what is equally true, and very bright and delightful. Are there any who, convicted of the sins of their past life, which have been very grievous, are ready to think that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy, and to say, "There is no hope for us ;—we are cut off for our part ?"—let them consider the words, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."—"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him." There is, undoubtedly, mercy for all of you, who are willing to receive it. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all sin, if it be ap-

plied to you. Of this there are most wonderful examples. For those who reviled and crucified him, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do:" and many of them were saved. The apostle Paul says, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief."—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Here, then, are striking patterns, and here is wonderful encouragement. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—"I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity." Only cast yourselves on the divine mercy, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and doubt not of a gracious reception, seeing he has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Again: *Let no feeble and contrite persons needlessly distress themselves now, as if they had been guilty of this sin.* Experience shows that instances of this alarm occur, from time to time. Distressed souls are sometimes tempted to think, and to say, that they have sinned beyond the reach of mercy; and not only are not pardoned, but never can be pardoned: and in assigning their reasons for so dismal a thought, they sum them up by declaring, with the deepest agony, that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. But surely, nothing but a most erroneous interpretation of this sin could lead them to fall into so sad a state. We have seen what the sin strictly consisted in; and unless these persons were situated, or at least felt, as the blaspheming Jews at the time of the miraculous operations, it would be most unjustifiable to apply the awful declaration to their case. Such persons should also consider that all hasty, erroneous, and even blasphemous thoughts and expressions against the Holy Ghost himself, did not then, and still less do now, necessarily amount to the unpardonable blasphemy here spoken of. For example, Simon the sorcerer was surely guilty of sinning, in one sense, and to a heinous degree, against the Holy Ghost, when he offered money for his miraculous gifts, and when Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right with God." And yet the inspired apostle did not consider Simon's case hopeless, or his sin unpardonable; for he said to him farther, "Repent therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." But Peter would not have spoken thus, if Simon's *sin* had amounted, in malignity, to that of which we are treating: *for,*

the apostle John says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that ye shall pray for it." We conclude, then, from Simon's case, though there is much reason for deep humiliation, there is no reason for absolute despair of forgiveness, even in many blasphemous thoughts and expressions relating to the Holy Ghost. Let persons who are tempted to such despairing thoughts, remember this. Let them also consider that the persons of whom Christ spoke were of a very different spirit, indeed, the very opposite spirit from them; for, instead of being afraid of such guilt, or being overwhelmed with grief and terror, or considering Jesus as a true Saviour at all, or having a longing desire for salvation through him, they were at ease in their minds, they were quite callous, and they derided him as an impostor. It is difficult to conceive two cases more completely dissimilar. It is quite certain that none who go so far as to acknowledge the divine mission of Christ, and desire salvation through him, can have been guilty of what is here called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Those who are most afraid of this sin, are commonly in least danger of it; and those who with agony express their conviction that they have been guilty of it, prove decidedly, by that very agony, that they have not. This awful declaration never did, and never could, extend to any, except to those who were guilty of what amounted to obstinately, perseveringly, and maliciously rejecting and opposing the gospel, under the most favourable circumstances. Let no awakened persons, then, write bitter things against themselves, or meditate terror, because of anything that is said in Scripture on this subject; seeing their very awakening, working as it does, is of itself a sufficient proof that they are mistaken in the application they are making of this to their own case. Let them rest assured that the door of mercy is open to them, if they have not already entered in by it. Let them rest assured that even their sins which lie more directly against the Spirit of God, whether in the way of quenching, or grieving, or even rashly blaspheming him, do not amount to the unpardonable blasphemy, but being felt as they are, come under the designation of the "all manner of sin and blasphemy" which may be forgiven. And therefore, instead of brooding any longer over their fancied hopelessness, let them look to God for strength to rise superior to their fears, and to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ. Thus shall they obtain, in the testimony of a pacified and purified conscience, a delightful proof that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

Once more here: *this subject warns all whom it may concern to beware lest, though they do not, perhaps because they cannot, commit the very same sin as to its circumstances, which is here described, they be guilty of what must have the same fatal result.* For one that distresses himself with the thought of having been guilty of the unpardonable sin, there are multitudes who are living in a state of unconcern, and contented rejection of the gospel. Of these,

some, like these Pharisees, acknowledge the facts of the miracles, but deny, or fail to embrace the doctrines, and neglect to practise the duties that flow from them: and it is too plain to need any lengthened proof, that, whatever may be the exact nature of the deception under which they labour, and of the iniquity they indulge, those who continue, to the end of their life, in an unbelieving and unconverted state, cannot be forgiven. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin to which it is applied; but it cannot cleanse from that sin to which it is not applied. God is merciful; but if the appointed way of mercy be disregarded, mercy cannot be had. No man cometh to the Father, but by the Son; and no man can say, in light and faith, that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost; if, therefore any man will not come to God by that way, and will not welcome the Spirit's aid, he cannot have life. Here, then, at least, as all of you must acknowledge, is now the unpardonable sin, namely, final impenitence. Beware, all ye who are now living in a state of present unbelief and impenitence, beware of all farther approaches to final unbelief and impenitence. If you go on to sin against information and conviction, and to exercise deliberate and malicious opposition to the truth, you will come peculiarly near to the very letter of the dreadful case here described. The description we have of this sin is, perhaps, intentionally involved in some obscurity, in order that men may be very much on their guard against it: but remember that mere delay, though the circumstances of that delay may not be aggravated, is an approach to final impenitence. Every moment you continue in your present condition brings you nearer and nearer to that point, at which, if you are found at last, there will remain for you no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain and fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour you as adversaries. According to every new opportunity you fail to improve, every new call you disregard, every new conviction you stifle, so is the probability increasing that you will never turn, and never be saved at all. O think aright of this, and follow up the thought. Do not presume to neglect and oppose the Spirit of God any longer, lest, in righteous judgment, he give you up, and strive with you no more, and cut you off suddenly, or leave you to die in your sins. Venture not a step nearer the brink of this dread ruin; but stop, and turn instantly. There is no safety for you but in immediate compliance with the divine call: "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?"—"To-day, if you will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," lest "God swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest." God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the true Jehovah, is now ready to receive, and pardon, and renew you: yield to him without more delay, and you shall not only escape the impending judgment, but shall obtain salvation with exceeding joy.

Verses 11 and 12: "*And when they bring you unto the syna-*

gogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing, ye shall answer, or what ye shall say : for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The advice and promise contained in these verses were very suitable to the disciples, many of whom were soon to be called before Jewish and Roman courts of various kinds, for the sake of Christ. A similar address was made to them on a former occasion, as appears from the 10th chapter of Matthew, and was repeated once more at least, as we find in the 21st chapter of this Gospel. Plain and illiterate, as the disciples generally were, they would be ready to be much alarmed at the thought of appearing before civil and ecclesiastical rulers and judges, not only from the apprehension that they might be condemned, if they did not plead their cause aright, but still more from the apprehension that from some failure in judgment, or memory, or eloquence, on their part, the cause of the gospel might suffer—which was dearer to them than their life. Their Lord, therefore, wisely and graciously counselled and encouraged them in that prospect. "Take ye no thought," said he;—not that *prudent* thought was unbecoming, or that they were to be rash, and speak unadvisedly with their lips: but they were forbidden to take anxious, perplexing, and disquieting thought, as the word might be rendered, and as he said on another occasion, "Take no thought for the morrow." Such thought as that, at the time they were speaking, would have argued distrust in God, and would have thrown them into such confusion as would have incapacitated them from speaking as they ought. They were not to be studious of making a fine appearance: nor were they to be apprehensive that the Lord would allow, either them to be put to shame, or his own cause to suffer. Nay, as spoken to those who were under the influence of plenary inspiration, these words forbade them to spend time in premeditation on their defence of themselves, or on their declaration of the gospel: for it is thus expressed, in Mark,* "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate."—"Take ye no thought," as it is in Luke, "how, or what thing," that is, either as to the manner or matter of what "ye shall answer," or say in defence of yourselves; "or what ye shall say," that is, what ye shall say in declaring the truth before your accusers and audience, be they what they may. And, to encourage them to this, he assures them that the Holy Spirit would suggest to them, at the time, whatever was proper to be said, and would direct and strengthen them to say it in the best manner. Now, all this is often exemplified very strikingly in the Acts of the Apostles, in which we read of several of the disciples being carried before different courts, where they trusted in God, and had this promise so fulfilled to them as to enable them to speak, and in every way to conduct themselves, in the most becoming and noble manner. Suffice it to refer to the following cases, for it

* Mark xiii. 11.

would take a considerable time fully to quote them:—the case of Peter and John, before the Sanhedrim, or chief council, in the 4th chapter—the case of Stephen before the same council, in the 6th and 7th chapters—and the case of Paul before Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, in the 18th, 24th, 25th, and 26th chapters, and before Nero, 2 Tim. iv.

As to the application of these words to the succeeding ages of the Church:—it becomes all Christians, and especially Christian ministers, neither presumptuously to abuse them, nor unbelievingly to neglect the legitimate encouragement which they contain. *It would, certainly, be a gross perversion of this passage, if any preachers were now to imagine that it would countenance them, in ordinary cases, in coming forward to preach without previous study.* Now that miraculous inspiration has ceased, they have to seek their knowledge from the Word of God, and in the way of diligent, persevering, and prayerful application of mind; that they may bring forward abundance of suitable matter, in the best way of which, all their other duties being considered, they are capable. Whatever might be the rule in cases of emergency, even the inspired teachers themselves were required thus, to “stir up the gift of God that was in them:” and therefore, much more is such diligence necessary in those who have no such inspiration. It is no difficult matter, indeed, for a man who abounds in self-confidence and readiness of expression, to speak often and long, in a certain way, of the things of God, with little or no preparation: but it is a poor boast to boast of such a habit; it is a poor compliment to the intelligence of his audience, to indulge it; there will be no need for him, or his admirers, to proclaim that his effusions are extemporaneous, for, that will be but too evident. In many cases, this is, doubtless, under the guise of zeal, the refuge of indolence; and it would be well for him, to consider whether he be not labouring under an error in imagining that there is any thing peculiarly spiritual, or praiseworthy, in offering to God that which costs him nothing. The words which were addressed to inspired Timothy, are surely at least as suitable in this view, to ordinary teachers: “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” In a different sense, David “prepared with all his might” “for the house of his God.”—“Because the preacher, too, was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.” If due diligence be not used, to expect the help of the Spirit is not faith, but presumption.

At the same time, there is much *direction and encouragement here to ministers, when they are in the way of duty.* The spirit of

this passage teaches them, not to fail to declare the will of God, when they are suddenly called on to do so in the course of providence. They are not to hang back, or to hesitate then, but are to discharge the duty in the best way they can, under God. On extraordinary occasions, they may expect, though not miraculous, yet extraordinary assistance. They may expect that their strength will be as their day; that their Master's grace will be sufficient for them, and that his strength will be made perfect in their weakness. Instances have occurred in which they have been unexpectedly called on, and have been enabled to go through the duty with much comfort and success. Proper ideas and expressions have flowed in upon them as fast as they could utter them, and have been rendered effectual to their hearers. Nor need they be afraid to speak, in any circumstances, however trying, or dangerous, into which their Lord brings them. This passage of the history of Moses is not without a permanent lesson: "Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."* Making allowance, too, for the difference between an inspired prophet and common teachers, the words of Jeremiah† are very encouraging: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." Nor less instructive and encouraging is the case of Isaiah.‡ When he had seen the glory of the Lord, and had heard the seraphim praising him, he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" he looked on himself as lost and helpless, unworthy either to join the seraphim in praising the Lord, or to proceed to declare his will to the people. "Then flew," continues Isaiah, "one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sins purged." Having thus obtained the assurance of his pardon and acceptance, as well as divine assistance for his work, the heaviest burden was lifted off his mind; and then, when he heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?" he was ready to reply, "Here am I, send me." How heavy the work of declaring salvation to others, and of confessing Christ before

* Exod. iv. 10.

† Jer. i. 6.

‡ Isa. vi.

men, for those who have themselves never been, like Isaiah, both cast down and lifted up! The taking away of their iniquity in the reality of pardon, and also the sense of pardon, are necessary to their speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God or for God. Happy they, who, having felt that they were undone, have obtained, from the true altar of atonement, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to keep their heart and mind through Christ Jesus! When the Lord bestows on them the joys of his salvation, and upholds them with his free Spirit, this works wonders in enabling them to teach transgressors his ways, that sinners may be converted unto him, and in opening their lips, that their mouth may show forth his praise.

This passage also encourages ministers to expect and pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost to teach them, in the act of studying the Scriptures, what they ought to say, and to guide them to the true understanding of them. It reminds them, too, that when they have done their best to prepare themselves, they need not, and should not, be filled with such anxiety as would distress them, or impede their work, but may, and should go forward to it, trusting to his influences to assist them, and to bless what they have to say. "Such trust have we through Christ towards God," says Paul; "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

But these two verses are also *very instructive to all professing Christians*. They teach them, for example, to look on what was spoken by the apostles and other inspired men, as spoken, not so much by them, as by God himself. The Holy Ghost taught them, and spake in them. "David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me." If "holy men of God," then, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," you see in what light their words are to be regarded, and with what faith, and love, and obedience, they ought to be received by you.

Again, you are here called on, by just inference, to distinguish between inspired and uninspired teachers. You are not to expect, or desire, that your teachers should take it upon them to speak and act as if they had miraculous gifts of inspiration. You ought not to suppose that they can furnish solid and well-digested instruction without time and labour. "Every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man who is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." Besides, this subject reminds you that your teachers need the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable them to speak aright and with success; and, therefore, it should

lead you to remember them in your approaches to the throne of grace. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified."

But, in reference more immediately to your own demeanour—though prudence and holy jealousy over yourselves are becoming, there is no cause why you should take anxious, perplexing, and distrustful thought, as to how you should speak and act. If you hold fast the doctrinal principles, and take due care to be well-informed as to the duties of the gospel, the Spirit of God will guide you in every emergency. Should you even be called before earthly rulers and courts for the gospel's sake, you would have no occasion to fear. "O Nebuchadnezzar," said the three Hebrew youths, "we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Many confessors and martyrs have spoken and acted with equal magnanimity in later ages; and none have any reason to fear that, when the time of trial comes, they will be deserted by him in whom they trust.

But, though nothing of this more fierce kind of temptation come upon you, you will be tried in your fidelity on many common occasions. You will have to witness the good confession before many witnesses, in your ordinary life and conversation. Desire to express yourselves always as you ought: but be not too thoughtful, be not over anxious. Beauty needs no adventitious ornament, and gold needs no gilding: so it is with the cause of Christ, with true religion; it needs none of the enticing words of man's wisdom; its glory cannot be increased—its value cannot be enhanced by man's invention. Maintain the truth just as it is—maintain it by word and action, plainly and boldly, and it will speak for itself. Do not thrust yourselves forward vainly, or out of your own place; but, when you are called by duty, when you are put forward by Christ, decline not the honour, be not diffident of him or of his cause. "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." If you trust in God to teach you what to say, because you are sensible that you cannot order your speech by reason of darkness, he will teach you, and he will give you wisdom and faithfulness. The Lord God will give you the tongue of the learned, that you may know how to speak a word in season; and each of you may say, "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

LECTURE LXV.

LUKE XII. 13-21.

“ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

WHILE our Lord was addressing himself directly to his disciples, in the hearing, and for the instruction, of the multitude who had assembled near the house of the Pharisee with whom he had been dining, and while he was teaching his disciples how to conduct themselves when they should be called before magistrates and powers for his sake, he met with a very unseasonable interruption. “ *One of the company,*” or, as it might be rendered, one of the crowd, “ *said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.*” As none of the other evangelists mentions this circumstance, we know nothing more of the character of this man than may be gathered from what is here said by Luke. It appears from Deut. xxi. 17, that the Jewish custom, sanctioned by divine authority, was, that a man’s inheritance was divided among his children, so that the eldest son had a double portion. Whether this was the elder or the younger son does not certainly appear, though it seems probable that there were just two sons in the family, and that this was the younger. Nor is it certain whether this man was applying in order to receive what was merely his due, and what was unjustly and covetously withheld from him, or, in order to get what was more than his due, such as an equal division of the property would have been. In any of these suppositions, there was a fault somewhere, and sufficient ground was laid for the warning Christ afterwards gave against covetousness. The man wished Christ to speak to his brother—that is, to speak with the authority of a judge—to tell him, in a way which would be effectual, to divide the inheritance with him according to the proportion he wished.

Our Lord positively declined to interfere in the affair, saying, "*Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?*" Christ was, indeed, King of kings, and Lord of lords; by him kings reigned, and princes decreed justice; and he could, with perfect ease, and unerring rectitude, have settled this dispute. But he would not do any thing which could give any handle to the rulers and judges to say that he was usurping their office; he had no such express appointment by human authority as would have been necessary, according to the common opinion of men, to have warranted his acting as a judge; and therefore, he would not interfere. The words which our Lord here employed, seem to be in allusion to what we thus read of Moses,* "*When he went out,*" "*behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?*" The two cases are by no means exactly parallel; there is, however, a similarity to a certain extent; and our Lord may have intended to signify, that, if he had judicially determined the dispute submitted to him, the same objection would have been made to his conduct as to that of Moses.

The word of God, my friends, affords men direction in all the circumstances of life, inasmuch, at least, as it contains general rules which may be applied to particular cases. It principally treats of spiritual topics; but most of these are such as bear on the concerns of common life. Its doctrines and duties are interwoven; and those who are guided by its dictates, are fitted for acting their part rightly in this world, while they are preparing for a better. The incident which it here records, affords a good illustration of this, as will appear from the following remarks which the history naturally suggests.

1. *Injustice and quarrels between near connexions, regarding the property of deceased relations, are very unseemly and unchristian.* It sometimes happens that the head of a family, or a very near relation, is no sooner laid in the grave, than the survivors, who expect to benefit in their substance by his decease, begin to strive about what he leaves behind him. How unbecoming, in the very face of such a memento of the vanity of earthly things, to be carried away by the desire of having, and that in such a way as to overlook the ordinary proprieties of life! Common feeling, not to speak of any higher principle, should at least teach them to keep such disputes to themselves (if they do at all arise), and not to outrage decency by making them public. Those who are so situated ought to avoid selfishness and injustice, to study each other's interest, and to pay particular attention to the more dependent, who should feel, on their part, that various kindnesses may be shown to them, as a matter of favour, which they have no room to claim as a matter of right; and all concerned ought to be ready, in every matter of doubt, to yield to the opinion of the wise and disinterested.

* Exod. ii. 13.

2. We may remark, from this passage, that those *who have any property to leave behind them should be careful timeously to settle their affairs, by a latter will, so that justice may be done, and disputes prevented, after they are gone.* In some cases, the law of the land may be sufficient to divide an inheritance as justice and a man's own reasonable inclination might desire. In most cases, however, there would be room for litigation; and in many cases, especially where there is much property, something that equity, or mercy requires, will be neglected, if there be no distinct testament. How far a man is at liberty to consult his own particular wishes on such an occasion, independently on the general principles of nearness of kindred, which are usually observed, is a very difficult question. No particular rules can be laid down to meet every case. The Christian should consult conscience, the Word of God, and, perhaps, also a judicious friend or two. No doubt, great injustice is often done in this way, by following out prejudices, and partialities, to the neglect of some who have a good claim on consideration. Mere caprice can never justify men in overlooking near relations, or those who have been long and remarkably serviceable to them, who are dependent on them, or stand in need of such aid: nor can that be justly considered as true charity, which is left to some public object, however useful in itself, when near relations, in a state of destitution, are forgotten. Where the property is great, something, more or less, according to circumstances, should be done for charitable purposes, even when there are heirs of the nearest relation to inherit the bulk of the property. Where there are no near connexions in a dependent condition, certainly a rich man is more at liberty to look abroad on society at large, and may feel himself in the way of duty, and may act very wisely and benevolently, not only in being ready to every good work, and giving with his own hands very freely while he lives, but also, in ordering his affairs so that the cause of religion and humanity shall be assisted by the greater part, or a large part, of his property, when he is gone. In all cases, men should consider themselves as accountable, at least to God, for the faithful discharge of their stewardship; and they should take care to settle their affairs, not only equitably and wisely, but also, in such a distinct manner as may effectually prevent disputes, and fulfil their just and benevolent intentions.

3. *The Gospel of Christ does not interfere with civil rights, or human laws.* No doubt, it is intended, and fitted, to influence them indirectly, for, every thing ought to be managed in a way consistent with its holy precepts; but it gives no countenance to its adherents to disregard existing institutions, or to usurp the places assigned to others. Dominion is not founded on grace. The provinces of civil and ecclesiastical government are quite distinct. Not but that they may, and should, be so managed, as mutually to assist each other; but still, their office is distinct, and relates to quite different things. The civil power

must not presume to usurp the office of Church government and discipline; nor must the ecclesiastical rulers presume to exercise the office of the judges, or wield the sword of state. Christ's followers must not, merely on the ground of being his followers, pretend to what he himself did not assume. He is the greatest of princes, and his gospel is the most powerful of dominions; but the influence he exercises by it is over the minds and hearts of men, not over their bodies and their property; or, at least, if he influence these latter, it is not by direct interference, but through the medium of the former. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—"The weapons of our warfare," said Paul, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Once more here, *this passage is unfavourable to ministers engaging in secular business, and especially, in public civil offices.* Even where the object is one of pure benevolence, and not likely to excite a prejudice against those who engage in it, but rather calculated to endear them to all parties, the appointment of the deacons in the Acts of the Apostles, to take care of the poor, that the twelve might not leave the word of God to serve tables, but give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, proves that ministers ought not to get so involved in the management of temporal charities, as would, in any considerable degree, interfere with their own proper duty of promoting the spiritual good of the people. Still more obvious, however, is the impropriety of their engaging in what is not so plainly benevolent, or, in what, though it may be useful and acceptable to some, must disappoint, and is therefore very likely to displease others. Should the business of arbitration, in order to prevent law-suits by private settlement, be thought an exception, a careful perusal of the first part of the 6th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in which that point is treated, will show that ordinary members, and not the public teachers of the Church, are to be looked to chiefly for that very useful work. As to their formal appointment to the office of magistrates, or judges, few things can be more improper.* Nor ought they to act a prominent part in any thing which, in reference to the passing affairs of life, might fairly subject them to the imputation of being, in any undue degree party-men. Like other men, they must be supposed to have their own

* Surely the appointment of ministers as justice of peace is very objectionable.

opinions ; but it is only where conscience, enlightened by the word of God, requires it, that they should take any active part. Those who undertake to propose to sinners of all parties the humble and self-denying doctrines and duties of the Gospel, have prejudices enough to encounter, without needlessly exciting more. Nor ought any secular business, or any amusements, to be engaged in by them, which would in any hurtful degree, withdraw their hearts, or their time, from their sacred functions. “No man that warreth,” says Paul to Timothy, “entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”—“Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them.”

But, to proceed with the passage before us ;—though our Lord declined interfering in the dispute, he, according to his usual custom, took occasion, from the application which was made, to suggest most important instruction to his hearers. As it was certain that covetousness, in one of the parties at least, if not in both, was the cause of the dispute, he laid hold on the circumstance to found on it a strong general caution against that sin. “*He said unto them,*” that is, to the whole crowd, as well as to his disciples, “*Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*” The word rendered covetousness, signifies having, or rather, the desire of having, more, that is, more than what is our own, or, more than Providence allots to us : and we are also guilty of covetousness, if we set our hearts chiefly on the things of this life, and make them the object of our supreme, or very anxious, desire, however honestly we may conduct ourselves. This caution Christ enforces, first of all, by the following reason, “*For a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*”* This is plainly true of the life of the soul, or man’s immortal interest. The wealth of the whole world has no value in reference to salvation. “We are redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Let no man, therefore, dream of putting his property, or any application of his property, however apparently charitable, or pious, in the room of the free grace of God, flowing through the righteousness of Christ, received by faith. But this assertion is also true of the life of the body, or temporal life. A man’s life consisteth not, or is not dependent on, abundance, nor is it secured by it. The *mere continuance of his life* is dependent, not on superfluities, but necessities. It is certain, too, that no wealth can prolong a man’s life, when the appointed time of his removal is come. The grim messenger will not be bribed away from doing his office. The rich cannot purchase a reprieve then, either for themselves, or for their friends. These words in the 49th Psalm, are to be understood in this literal sense, as well as in reference

* Non possidentem multa vocaveris

Recte beatum : rectius occupat

Nomen, &c.

Hor. Carm. lib. iv. 9.

Τὸ ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἐν πολλῇ ἡλικίᾳ ἐστὶν ἐκείνῳ· οὐδὲ μὴ, οὐκ ἐκείνῳ.—Epict. iii. 7.

to salvation: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever) that he should live for ever and not see corruption." The *credit* of a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth: for, wealth, abused to impiety and profligacy, becomes the means of elevating some to a conspicuous pinnacle of shame, while, in the midst of virtuous poverty, many are truly respectable, in the eyes both of God and of man. Nor, while this life lasts, does even the *happiness* of it depend on such abundance. No doubt, there are various comforts which wealth can purchase, and which are not to be despised; but too much value must not be attached to them: much more is generally expected from them than experience justifies. There is much more comparative temporal enjoyment in the lowlier walks of life, where good principle and good conduct prevail, than the votaries of this world's riches and honours imagine. Temperance is favourable to health, and labour, to good spirits and to repose: and there are a thousand cares to vex the ambitious and the high, to which the contented and the lowly are strangers. Where there are the renewed and humble heart, trust in Providence, the hope of glory, and domestic peace, their life is truly happy, much more happy than in the gayest scenes of fashion and irreligion. "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."—"Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices, with strife." So says the wisest of men: and with him agrees the Psalmist, "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Wealth, in many cases, is accompanied with much care and trouble: and it is, even in the most favourable cases, altogether insufficient to give satisfaction. "I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me," said Solomon, "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces:" "and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy."—"And, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." A pious spirit of dependence on the providence and grace of God, is necessary to the enjoyment of temporal life, and to the very existence of spiritual life; "for a man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Still farther to illustrate and enforce the caution he had given against covetousness, our Lord spoke the parable of the rich fool. The case supposed in this parable, it is important to observe, is by no means one of the worst. The man is not said to

have got his riches by oppression, extortion, or fraud; neither is he said to have been what we call a miser. He had extensive grounds, which, by good management, we must suppose, and the blessing of heaven, were very productive in general, and which, in this particular season, had borne a peculiarly luxuriant crop. So abundant was the produce, that he found it could not be contained in the barns he already had. The proposal he made will appear more natural, if we suppose it was the custom, as it is still in some of the southern parts of this island, not to build any of the produce of the fields in the open air, but to stow up the whole at once in barns. For such a practice, large barns are necessary. This man, therefore, proposed to pull down his present houses, and to build larger barns and granaries, which would be sufficient to contain all the produce of the year, and also, all the remaining corn of former years, and other fruits and goods which he had already accumulated. And he proposed, after that, to cease entirely, or in a great measure, from the cares and labours of husbandry, and every other business, and to give himself to indulgence in the use of what would be sufficient for many years. Now, there is nothing which is uncommon in this, or which, at first sight, may appear very bad. "The character here drawn is exactly that of a prudent worldly man, who rises from inferior circumstances to great affluence, by assiduous industry and good management, and then retires from business to spend the latter part of his life according to his own inclinations."* Is not such a case of frequent occurrence? are there not many who, though they have not attained, are aiming at this? and are there not multitudes who would consider such a consummation as the very summit of their ambition, and the height of earthly felicity?

But observe this character more minutely, and see how its black traits appear one after another. First of all, there was here no acknowledgment of the power and bounty of the Most High, who rendered the ground fruitful, and in whose hand it was to give wealth; and therefore, there was here a degree of impiety, amounting to virtual atheism. Again, there was here no proper sense of responsibility to God for the right use of the property, no sense of the duties of stewardship, no regard to the maxim that to whom much is given, of the same much will be required. Hence, there was no consideration how the glory of God and the good of man might be promoted by all this abundance. He spake of his fruits and his goods as his own, saying, "*My fruits,*" and "*My goods,*" in a way that overlooked God's property in them. He said, with anxiety, "*What shall I do?*"—he was perplexed; and the poorest beggar, who knew not what he was to have to-morrow, could not have been more disturbed. What shall I do!—were there not many important services, and good things he might have done with all this wealth? Might he not have thought of the poor, the stranger, the fatherless,

* Scott.

and the widow? Or, if he was to store up, which might have been useful to a certain extent, why speak of storing "*all*" his fruits and goods? might not part have sufficed?—surely to speak of laying up all, was very bad. And then, the base selfishness which was here! for the man's thoughts turned only on himself, and his own mean gratifications: "*Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*" This was the language of the Epicurean: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."* This was addressing his soul, as if it had no capabilities, nor prospects, beyond those of the beasts that perish. Here was no wish to find happiness in God, but a desire, and an expectation, of ease and happiness without him. What inconsideration was here, too, of the instability of human affairs! It never occurred to the man that if he were to continue his endeavour after wealth, the next year might not be so prosperous as this, and his hopes might be blasted: neither did he consider that, if he were to give up all business, the wealth he had actually acquired might be destroyed or spoiled, or violently taken from him in some revolution of affairs. And then, what presumption to resolve on this absolutely counting on the continuance of his life and comforts, independently on the will of God! How presumptuous to reckon, in any way, on many years to come, when he was not sure that he would live, and when the event showed that he did not live, to see the light of another day!

While the man was indulging his wild reverie, and addressing himself in this impious soliloquy, "*God said unto him*"—in the language of parable, God may be considered as saying or expressing in words what he actually does—"God said unto him, *Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*"—"Thou fool!" How different the judgment of God, from the judgment of the world, with regard to wisdom! A man, such as we find described in this parable, would be generally considered as a sensible, prudent, and well-doing man. To be wise to gain wealth, is esteemed, by most people (judging by their conduct, if not by their profession), as the chief wisdom; and the actual possession of wealth seems, as it were, to make a man wondrously wise, and to give great weight to his opinion. It is not thus, however, that the Lord judges. He who can so rest in his possessions as to neglect his soul, is pronounced, by an unerring authority, to be a fool, whatever sagacity he may discover in other respects. And, surely, this judgment is according to truth; for, what folly can be greater than for a man to neglect his chief interest, and so to miscalculate, as to value an unsatisfying and perishing, higher than an all-sufficient and everlasting good? Such is the infatuation of the world, that they are even heard,

* "*Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas.*"

Ὡς οὖν ἐστὶν εὐδὶ ἱερῶν

Καὶ πινε, καὶ खुδινε, &c.

Anacr. Od. xv. 11.

Epictetus thus addresses the Epicurean, Καλῶς, ἱερῶν, πινε, खुδινε.

at times, to represent a supreme regard to the soul's salvation as a proof of weakness and folly. But Jehovah declares, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding;" and every wise man will think with him. The Psalmist* thus describes the folly of the worldlings, and of the admiration with which they are too commonly regarded: "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations: they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless, man, being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings."—"Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased: for when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul (and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself), he shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

"Thou fool"—"thy *soul* shall be required of thee." It is his soul which is required; his immortal soul is called away from his body, to be condemned to endless misery. It is *required*—it is positively demanded. The believer resigns his life cheerfully—he yields up the ghost: but the sinner dies reluctantly—his soul is forcibly taken away. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" But the original word, exactly rendered, is, *They require thy soul*;—they, that is, probably, the fallen spirits; for, as when Lazarus died, he was "carried by the angels," doubtless the holy angels, "into Abraham's bosom," so, it is supposed, on the other hand, that the fallen angels, or devils, are employed as messengers, to require, and carry away the souls of those who die in sin: a very dreadful thought, too dreadful indeed to be dwelt on. *Thy soul* is required "of *thee*," thine own soul of thyself; and no ransom, no substitute, will be accepted. Thy soul is required "*this night*," this very night. No reprieve is allowed; "he dieth in his full strength, being wholly at his ease and quiet." He dies forthwith, suddenly, in the very midst of his impiety and folly, and without time for reflection, or repentance. How awful! and yet how common! "*Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?*" Those fruits, and goods, and riches, thou hast so carefully heaped together for thyself, whose shall they be, when thou art gone? Perhaps, he cannot conjecture, or his expectation may be frustrated. "Surely, every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." Or, if they go to his children, or near relations, that can afford him but little comfort, when they cannot prevent him from dying in misery, and may be abused, and prove a curse to ~~those~~

* Ps. xlix. 11.

who are to inherit them. "Yea," said Solomon,* "I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun; because I shall leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man, or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour, wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity." "Whose shall those things be?" At all events, they shall be no longer his: they can no longer afford him any succour; he must leave them all behind him.

Such is the parable; and Jesus himself gives us the application of it, in these words, "*So is he,*" so is every one, be he what he may, and however inoffensively and respectably, in human estimation, he may manage his affairs, so is he "*that layeth up treasure for himself,*" for his own sake, for his own pleasure, for increasing his own consequence, for making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;—"and is not rich toward God," with respect to God, or, in a spiritual sense; who is not rich in faith, and piety, and good works—who has no treasure lodged, so to speak, in the Lord's hand, and therefore, sure and everlasting. Every such person is like the man in this parable: he is a fool, his life is vanity, and his end will be destruction.

This, then, my hearers, is the leading exhortation which this passage calls on me to address to you, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness.*" And do not suppose that there is no need to address to you such an exhortation: for, the temptation to the sin is great, and its influence very common. You will find it necessary to be on your guard against it during the very time of the public services of the sanctuary; for there is no doubt that thoughts of worldly goods and worldly gain may intrude so as to prevent all benefit from these services, and even turn them into impiety. Take warning from these words in Ezekiel: "Also thou son of man, the children of thy people are still talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with the mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." But if covetousness may intrude on you, even in the hours of devotion and religious instruction, much more is there a danger of its creeping on you on common occasions. The feeling of the advantages and comforts unquestionably connected with a competency, is too ready to pave the way for a dangerous and sinful preference of temporal to spiritual things. Be entreated to beware of covetousness, whether consisting in too great anxiety in getting, or in covetousness in keeping.

Various arguments may be urged against the indulgence of this sin. It is of a most insinuating nature, and therefore to be

* Eccles. ii. 18.

most carefully guarded against. It is unreasonable, unjust, and unmerciful. If this passion be given way to, it can never be satisfied. "He that loveth silver," says Solomon, "shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Instead of being appeased by getting, the thirst will be increased. The spirit of covetousness is inconsistent with peace, and breaks the rest. It has been remarked, and the remark is well worthy of consideration, that covetousness is unprecedented in the Scripture history of believers. "One, indeed, spoke unadvisedly with his lips; another cursed and swore; a third was in a passion; and a fourth was guilty of adultery and murder: but which of the saints ever lived in a habit of covetousness?" And, be it remembered, that, according to Col. iii. 6, "covetousness is idolatry," and one of the things for the sake of which "the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." The essence of idolatry consists in the departure of the heart from the living God; and is not this such a departure? is it not forsaking the Lord, and making a god of gain? Let the judgments be considered which have come on such characters, in this life—for example, on Achan, who coveted and took the goodly Babylonish garment, the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold, and hid them in his tent; and on Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price of the land. And let it be considered how this sin shuts men out of the kingdom of heaven, and entails judgments on them for ever. Alas! there is reason to fear that many perish utterly, because of the unrestrained indulgence of this sin; and that much loss is incurred, because of its partial indulgence, by many believers who are not altogether its slaves. Consider well, then, whether some of you be not guilty in this respect. No longer load yourselves with the thick clay which may destroy you, or, at least, greatly impede your steps towards heaven.

And think not, ye who are poor, that your poverty is a security against this sin. Covetousness consists, not in the actual possession of riches, but in the disposition in reference to them. A man may be very rich, and very generous: and so, a man may be very poor, and very covetous.

This passage, however, certainly speaks more particularly to those of you who are prospering in your substance. It loudly warns you to repent, if you be thriving in your property, but in a state of carelessness and ungodliness. "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you." Let those who are prosperous, but not entirely given to covetousness, be aware of their danger. "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!" What hindrances lie in his way! Beware of being proud of your substance, or of valuing yourselves highly because of it. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man

glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." Beware of setting your affections on your wealth. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them."—"Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." Be thankful to God for the good things he has given you; and honour him with them, by a proper use of them. If they increase much, do not lay up *all*, nor nearly all; but become liberal in deeds of piety and charity, according as God has prospered you. Let your abundance be a supply for the wants of others. Do not trust in your riches; but trust in the Lord, and do good. "Charge them that are rich in this world," says Paul to Timothy, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

And finally, whatever be your situation, or circumstances, seek to become possessed of the true riches, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and hold yourselves in readiness to leave the world and its possessions. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." Be sensible of your spiritual poverty, and receive with cheerfulness the true riches. Say not that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing"—"for you are wretched, and miserable, and poor." I counsel you to buy of Christ, "gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich." Do not foolishly and presumptuously calculate on many years, or days, here; but remember that you may never see the light of another day: and ask yourselves, each of you, Where would my soul be to-morrow, if it should be required of me to-night?—May the Lord give you the right understanding, and personal application, of these things; and to his name be praise. Amen.

LECTURE LXVI:

LUKE XII. 22-31.

“ And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. 24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them; how much more are ye better than the fowls? 25. And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27. Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

THE attentive reader of Scripture will perceive that not only the substance, but most of the very words, of this passage, are recorded as having been spoken by our Lord on a former occasion, namely, in his sermon on the mount, as we find in the latter part of the 6th chapter of Matthew. Though in Jesus Christ were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and though he poured out his instructions in wonderful variety, yet, we repeatedly read of him saying the same things on different occasions. He knew what circumstances required this, and what were the points which it was especially necessary to press on men's attention. “ God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet,” too often, “ man perceiveth it not.” We require to have “ line upon line.”—“ To write the same things to you” (says Paul), “ to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” The instructions in these verses came in very appropriately after what our Lord had been saying to the multitude on the subject of covetousness. Led on by what one of the company, or rather crowd, had said to him about dividing an inheritance, Christ, though he declined to interfere, addressed to the whole multitude a caution against covetousness, and enforced that caution by the parable of the rich fool. In the verses now before us, however, he addresses himself more immediately to the disciples, to those who habitually waited on his ministry, especially the twelve. And whereas what he had said before was more particularly calculated to meet the dangers of that kind of covetousness to which the rich were most exposed, what he now says is more particularly calculated to obviate the anxieties which are more ready to beset the poor, or at least, those who are in lowly and *not* very prosperous circumstances. Addressed, too, as *these words*

are, to his own disciples, they are characterized by the most affectionate tenderness.

“*And he said unto his disciples, Therefore,*” because of the uncertainty and insufficiency of earthly things, “*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat ; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*”—“Take no thought,” is too feeble a rendering of the original, which signifies, Be not distressingly anxious, or, Take no perplexing thought.* We can never suppose that our Lord intended to inculcate what may be called thoughtlessness or carelessness. It is true that the affairs of time, of this life, and of the body, are much less important than those of the soul and of eternity ; but still, they require a considerable degree of attention, and cannot be neglected without sin, and without injury to the spiritual state. There is, certainly, incumbent a prudent attention to the preservation of our own life, and to the acquisition of those things which are necessary for the body ; for, “no man,” in the right exercise of reason, “hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” Diligence in one’s calling is also plainly incumbent : “This we commanded you,” says Paul, “that if any would not work, neither should he eat : for we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.” It is a man’s duty diligently to provide for his family and dependents, as well as for himself ; for “he that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” A man ought to manage his affairs with discretion ; he should consider well what he can afford, that he may not go beyond his income, and injure others, and involve himself in difficulties—he should see that no bounty of Providence be wasted—he should avoid needless expense, that, if he can, he may have some provision for sickness and old age—he should attend to personal decency and comfort, in food and dress, according to his station—and, if he can do so without infringing on the duties of integrity and benevolence, he should try to make some provision for those who may be dependent on him, when he is gone. At the same time, there is great danger of this being carried too far, so that the affairs of this life shall usurp the chief place in the heart. It is plain that this caution of our Lord is transgressed when men have recourse to any unlawful means of preserving or increasing their substance, or procuring even the necessaries of life. It is transgressed, too, when means which are in themselves lawful are prosecuted with too great eagerness, so as to preclude due attention to spiritual things, or hurtfully to distract the mind. It is sinful to be wrapped up in secular concerns at present, and it is sinful to be distrustful of Providence as to the future. Let a man be in the way of duty, and he has no occasion to distress himself with anxious cares as to future supplies. Undue anxiety and distrustful thoughts are unbecoming, even in reference to

* So in verse 11.

what is necessary as to food and clothing, and much more in reference to luxurious pampering and show.

Our Lord proceeds to enforce this caution against sinful and anxious care, and to encourage his disciples to trust in Providence, from a variety of considerations. First of all, he pleads the experience of greater favours already received. "*The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*" The life is certainly more valuable than the food by which it is supported, and the body than the raiment with which it is clothed. If, then, God has formed the body itself, and maintains it in life, may he not be trusted, too, for supporting that body in life as long as he sees it fit? Should not he who has done the greater, be trusted in for the less? See, here, then believers, a principle which, if properly followed out, would prove an antidote to all your anxieties. It is not merely God's having formed your bodies, and given and maintained your natural life, but it is all his past goodness to you that you have to consider, and especially his goodness to your souls, his unspeakable love shown towards you through his Son. He has, indeed, as we have frequent occasion to remark, done more for you already than he has ever to do again, in reference either to your spiritual or temporal wants: and, therefore, you should not distrust him now, either as to the one or as to the other. He who has done the greater favours to you, when you were his enemies, will surely do the less favours when you are his friends. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—"God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

The second consideration against anxious thoughts, which our Lord advances, is, God's care over the irrational animals. "*Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn;** and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" God's care over the lower animals is repeatedly noticed in Scripture. "Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat."—"The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God"—"The earth is full of thy riches, so is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great."—"These all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good." They are supported without forethought,

* *ὅς τις locus secretior* (locus secretior, serarium), *ὅς τις ἀποθήκη* (horreum.) Lightfoot thinks that the former word means a storehouse for fruits, and the latter a storehouse for grain.

and generally without labour. The following extract from the Rabbins, is curious and appropriate: "Hast thou ever seen a beast that had a workshop? yet they are fed without labour, and without anxiety. They were created for the service of man, and man was created that he might serve his Creator. Man also would have been supported without labour and anxiety, had he not corrupted his ways. Hast thou ever seen a lion carrying burdens, a stag gathering summer fruits, a fox selling merchandise, or a wolf selling oil, that they might thus gain their support? and yet they are fed without care or labour. Arguing, therefore, from the less to the greater, if they which were created that they might serve me, are nourished without labour and anxiety, how much more I, who have been created that I might serve my Maker? What therefore is the cause, why I should be obliged to labour in order to get my daily bread? Answer, sin."* Thus, though God does not exempt his people from diligence to procure a livelihood, surely the consideration of his care, even for the fowls of heaven, should preserve his people from all distrust as to their own supplies. "He teacheth them more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh them wiser than the fowls of heaven." They are far superior in dignity and destiny, and, therefore, are far more the objects of his care. Look, then, believers, on the birds of the air, proverbial for their cheerfulness, whose species are preserved, though they are early deserted by their dam, and beset with many enemies, and destitute of your wisdom, and of much less value than you; and behold what should assure you of safety and all needful supplies of the bread that perisheth, and of the bread of life. Look on them, and learn to trust in God for this your daily food; thus shall you "dwell on high, your place of defence shall be the munition of rocks: bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure."

The third consideration which our Lord urges is, the unavailing nature of all such anxiety. "*And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*" It is quite certain that, however desirous any person might be to become taller, no anxiety after it could make any addition to his height. The word rendered "stature," may also be rendered "age," there being a connexion between the one and the other, in so far that some idea may, in early life at least, be generally formed of one's age, from one's stature or height. In this sense of the word, too, it is equally plain that no man by taking thought could add to his age; for, not to insist on the doctrine of there being an appointed time for man on earth, great anxiety after life and anxious thought of every kind must tend to impair a man's health, and, of course, to shorten his life, instead of lengthening it. It has been often observed that the same words are sometimes employed to denote a measure of extension, and a

* Dr. A. Clarke on Matt. vi. 26.

measure of time. "Teach me to know mine end, and the measure of my days," says the Psalmist; "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth." A cubit is here put, proverbially, for any small portion. Men's utmost anxiety cannot make the least addition to their stature or age. And so it is in general; prudent management is incumbent, and may likely be useful; but as to anxious and distrustful thoughts, they cannot add even the least to temporal prosperity, but are rather injurious to it. Therefore, why should men distress themselves, as if they could, by such anxiety, gain the greatest objects, when they cannot gain by it the least? Let this argument, then, be considered by you likewise. All your sinful anxiety will be useless, and worse than useless: vex not, then, yourselves in vain; but follow the path of duty, and leave the result, without distrust, to Him who can do for you both the least and the greatest favours.

The fourth consideration which our Lord brings forward as a remedy against anxiety of every kind, and particularly against anxiety with regard to clothing, is drawn from the vegetable kingdom, from the flowers and the grass of the field. "*Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.*" The great men, and especially the kings of the East, were often arrayed in very magnificent apparel. Thus, "Mordcai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple."* Though we have no particular description of Solomon's dress, yet we read† that when "the kings of the earth sought his presence, they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment;" and that when the queen of Sheba saw, among other sights, "the apparel of his ministers, and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her:" we may be sure, therefore, that his dress was very splendid. If it was of white, or chiefly of white, the lily was well selected to represent it. But, beautiful as it was, it is surpassed in beauty by the lily of the field, which has a softness, an elegance, and a richness, which art cannot rival. Man may, indeed, imitate the beauty of God's works, yet they ever leave him far behind. Our Lord thus applies this reference to the lilies, "*If then, God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" The word rendered "grass," may be so extensively understood as to include, not merely what we usually call grass, but more generally "herbs." Or, taking it literally for grass, the structure of grass is very beautiful; and, unlike human workmanship, however fine, the more minutely grass, or any vegetable, is examined, the more exquisite it appears; instead of losing, it gains wonderfully, when viewed through a microscope. But the grass and the flower of the field

* Esth. viii. 15.

† 2 Chron. ix. 4, 24.

are also proverbial for being tender, and short-lived, and soon withered. "In the morning," says the Psalmist, "the grass flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withered."—"As the flower of the grass, he shall pass away," says James; "for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, than it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth. In the East, where fuel is scarce, they are said still to heat their ovens with dry straw, stubble, and withered herbs. We see, then, what are the circumstances on which this argument is founded; and as to its application, that is obvious. Nothing but weakness of faith, with which we frequently read of Jesus charging his disciples, could occasion them distressing anxiety as to how they were to be furnished with clothing.

These two verses, though not spoken chiefly with that view, contain an exposure of the folly of pride in clothes. It is right that men should be attentive to decency, cleanliness, and propriety, in their clothing; but, extraordinary nicety (which by-the-by, is as likely to prevail where there is great care to avoid changes of fashion, as where they are naturally followed), and also all extravagance, and all excessive and unsuitable ornament, are doubtless wrong. Though Scripture does not prohibit all ornament in dress, it certainly inculcates moderation, and teaches that the chief ornament should be, not that outward adorning, or putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. And then, suppose a man or woman, gorgeously apparelled; how little is there to be proud of, because of that in which he or she is outshone by the perishing flowers of the field! Nay, did not the necessity of clothing arise from our fall from God? what, then, are our garments, rightly considered, but monuments of our shame, and constant lessons of humility?

But, these two verses are more immediately intended to chide God's people out of their anxieties, and to encourage them to trust in him. Look upon the lily, O believer, in its downy whiteness, and upon the grass, in its robe of green; and let the sight, so refreshing to the outward eye, also recall to thy remembrance thine own privileges, and refresh thy heart with the assurance that he who paints the lily with its downy whiteness, and casts over the grass its robe of green, will much more clothe thee.

Verse 29: "*And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink:*" that is, do not make these things the object of eager, and chief pursuit. "*Neither be ye of doubtful mind.*" The Greek word * expresses the situation of meteors in the air—clouds for example, which are restless, and driven about with every wind. "Any speculations and musings, in which the mind fluctuates, or is suspended in an uneasy hesitation, might well be expressed

* *Μεταμετερίζομαι.*

by such a word.”* My friends, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, and whatever thoughtlessness may prevail in their minds for a time, they who have no confidence in the grace and providence of God, are subject to a most distressing unsteadiness. They are like the flying clouds, or troubled sea, that cannot rest. But a composed and settled spirit, which will stand inquiry, is essential to your happiness. Be entreated, then, to settle yourselves on the foundation laid in Zion, for safety to your souls, and in connexion with this, to depend habitually on God’s good providence. In the language of Isaiah, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

A fifth consideration against such earthly desires and anxious pursuits, is presented to us in the example of the heathen and men of the world, to which Christians ought not to be conformed: “*For all these things do the nations of the world seek after.*” Be unrenewed men what they may, be they heathen idolaters, or nominal Christians; all of them intensely seek after† worldly objects such as these. “They who are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh:”—it is only they who are after the Spirit, who are regenerated, that mind the things of the Spirit. All natural men are inquiring, “Who will show us any good?” any temporal good. Here is the argument, Gentiles and all who are strangers to the covenant of promise, and the hopes and consolations of the gospel, are supremely seeking meat, and drink, and clothing—worldly gratification, and knowing no better, their choice is not to be wondered at: but Christians have higher privileges, views, and hopes; and therefore, such conduct is quite unworthy of them. My hearers, it is the essence of heathenism and of irreligion in every form, to live for this world: and it is the essence of true godliness to live for the other. Say for which of the two you are living.

A sixth consideration against sinful and distressing anxiety about earthly things, even the necessities of life, is stated by our Lord in these beautiful words, “*And your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*” What an endearing and encouraging view of God! He is the Father of his people—not only their Creator and their Preserver, but their reconciled Father, who loves them as his own adopted children resembling him; and of whom we have this description, that “as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” He is their *heavenly* Father, and therefore more able, and more ready to help them, than any earthly father. This is the endearing title by which we are encouraged to address him in the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer, when we are taught to say, “Our Father who art in heaven.” And what should prevent any of you from coming to him in that character? It is true that you have sinned against heaven, and in his sight, and

* Doddridge.

† ἑνταῦθα:—intensivum.

are no more worthy to be called his children : yet he is ready to receive you back into his family, and every barrier to your return is removed out of the way ; say, then, each of you, “ I will arise and go to my Father.” — “ Wilt thou not from this time cry, Thou art my Father, thou art the guide of my youth ? ” You, at least, who have already returned to him, will feel the endearing and powerfully encouraging nature of this relation ; “ for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Mark, too, the idea that your heavenly Father *knows* that ye have need of these things—knows what things are necessary for you. He who knows all things, takes a peculiar and gracious cognizance of the affairs of his own people, and is especially concerned to help them in all their troubles, and to supply all their wants. The words addressed to Israel, by Moses, are always applicable, in their spirit, to believers : “ The Lord thy God knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness : these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee ; thou hast lacked nothing.” The mere fact that your heavenly Father knows what you need, is very encouraging ; but when you add to his knowledge his love and his power, you may perceive the certainty of his giving you all that is needful. As our Lord says elsewhere, “ Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him : ” but if ye do ask, you have a positive promise that he will help you. When even an earthly Father listens to the application and supplies the wants of his son, “ how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him ! ” In the language of Paul to the Philippians, “ My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches and glory, by Christ Jesus.”

The passage before us concludes with an exhortation to seek a nobler than an earthly object, and a promise that if we do so, less important things will be granted also : “ *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be added unto you.* ”

Observe here, in the first place, what we are to understand by “ the kingdom of God ; ” the great object which we are exhorted to seek. The kingdom of God signifies, both the kingdom, or reign, of God in the blessings of the gospel on earth, and the kingdom, or reign, of God, in the perfection of holiness and happiness in heaven. These are inseparably connected ; and the phrase is used in its true and proper meaning, when it is used to include both. The possession of the blessings of the kingdom of glory on high, pre-supposes the possession of the blessings of the kingdom of grace on earth. Hence, in the parallel passage (Matt. vi. 33), the words are, “ Seek ye ” “ the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Now, the righteousness of the gospel is imputed, inward, and active. If you would become possessed of the kingdom of God, then you must receive the righteousness of God, the righteousness appointed and

accepted by God, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the ground of your acceptance with God, as your title to the kingdom, "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." You must obtain, also, that inward righteousness which consists in being renewed through the Word and by the Spirit, after the image of him who created you; for "except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And you must cultivate all the graces, and habits of holiness, which constitute the reality of the reign of God here, and the fitness for his presence hereafter.

Observe next, what is implied in *seeking* the kingdom of God. Seeking the blessings of this kingdom implies that you feel you need of them, that you have a just value of their importance, that you fix your attention and desires upon them, that you diligently use the outward means of attaining them, and that you sincerely, and decidedly, and perseveringly follow after till you actually find them. This may also signify seeking the peace, purity, prosperity, and extension of the gospel.*

Observe, thirdly, what is implied in "*rather*" seeking the kingdom of God, or, as it is in Matthew, seeking it *first*. It implies that you seek it first, or rather, in point of *importance*; judging it to be of much more value than any worldly advantages whatever. You are not prohibited from considering other things of some importance; but this must be your grand object. You must be able to say, with Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,"—"that I may win Christ, and be found in him." In connexion with this, seeking the kingdom of God rather, or first, implies your seeking it more earnestly, and with greater exertion, than any thing else. "Labour not" (that is, comparatively) "for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." And seeking the kingdom of God first, or rather, implies that you seek it early, and first in point of *time*. Do not say that you will attend to your salvation afterwards, but that you have other things to settle first. Begin with the most important. Say not, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season I will call for thee;" for, no time can be so suitable as the present. If you delay here, the opportunity may be lost for ever.

Consider, lastly, the *promise* by which this exhortation is enforced; if you seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, rather than meat, and drink, and clothing, "*All these things shall be added unto you:*" you shall obtain the kingdom, you shall have salvation of course; and not only so, but all these necessities, all desirable temporal things, in so far as they are real blessings,* in so far as they are for God's glory and your good, shall be given you over and above, shall be thrown in along with these*

* Ps. cxxii. 9: "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

more valuable gifts. Think of Solomon, who, when God said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee," asked "a wise and understanding heart," and who obtained that, and along with that, what he did not ask—riches, honour, and length of days. Think of the widow of Zarephath, who, of the little remaining meal she had, made a cake for Elijah first, and after that made for herself and her son; and think how her store was therefore blessed. Think how, as appears from Haggai, the Jews were visited with famine and distress, when they neglected the temple work and offerings; and how prosperity smiled on them, when they attended to religious duties. Think of the words of the Psalmist: "O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—"The Lord God is a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Think of the words of the apostle: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Especially, think of the words already quoted, and how they connect all these blessings with the gift and reception of Jesus Christ: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Let these brief hints, on this rich verse, suffice. See here, all of you, where lies your true interest, both for time and for eternity. Sinners! if you desire your true good, seek that good with which all other good is connected. Believers! keep fast hold of the blessings of the kingdom of God; for, this is the way to secure, and to enjoy present good. The exclamation of a certain poor man over his very homely fare may seem to reverse the order of this promise, but it was the natural, and beautiful, and grateful result of looking at the same truth from another quarter:—"What! all this, and heaven besides!" Be thankful, brethren, for every past blessing; and do not dishonour God by worldliness and sinful anxieties as to the future. "Cast all your care upon him, for, he careth for you."—"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

END OF VOLUME I.





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